

Practical Preparation

F O R

D E A T H,

T H E

Interest and Wisdom

O F

CHRISTIANS.

The Folly and Misery of those
that are negligent therein.

The great Benefits of a Life spent in
a daily Preparation for our latter
end; with Motives and Directions
for the performance thereof.

*O that they were wise, that they understood
this, that they would consider their
latter end! Deut. 32. 29.*

Recommended as proper to be given
at Funerals.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Nathanael Ranew, at
the King's-Arms in St. Paul's
Church-yard, 1692.



T O T H E
R E A D E R.

Christian Reader,

THat all Men are Mortal, and must certainly fall under the stroke of *Death* some time or other, is a Truth as plain and visible, as any thing that is written with the Beams of the *Sun*. Powerful *Death* hath in all Ages of the World come with such strong Convictions, sweeping away all before it, that none can or dare deny that they must *die*: And though some have lived many hundred years longer than others; yet of *Methuselah* who lived the longest of any Man in the World, even to nine hundred sixty and nine years, it is said of him, as well as of the Infant that is newly born and laid in its Grave, that he is dead.

Death is always riding upon its pale Horse in triumph over all Persons, in all places, at all times, being no Respector of Persons; but whether they be high or low, young or old, rich or poor, it levels all equal with the dust.

And though all Men know and believe that they shall die; yet what with those

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that are young, who therefore look upon it to be too soon for them so much as to think of *dying*; and what with those that are in the prime of their years and so are very healthful and strong, and think that therefore they must not *die* yet; and what with those who tho' they are old, yet think they may have their days lengthned out a little longer, very few there are that lay to Heart their own *Frailty* and *Mortality*; yea though the fore-runners of *Death*, that is, *Sicknesses* and *Distempers* of Body, which are very many, abound in every place, and visit every Family, and are unto all as so many Summons unto the Grave; yet notwithstanding all this, and what often follows hereupon, the frequent *Deaths* of many round about them; yet how strangely, I had almost said willingly, do most Men cheat themselves now, and destroy themselves for ever hereafter, by putting far away the thoughts of *Death*, and their preparations for it.

But why, *O Sinners*, should you be guilty of such unaccountable Folly and Madnes in wasting your precious time, and in ruining and destroying your more precious Souls to Eternity? Have you never heard or read (if you have not I know who hath) of some who upon a *Death bed*, in great bitterness of Soul and extream anguish of Spi-

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Spirit, have spent that little time that was then left them, under great Horrors and Consternation, calling themselves Fools and Mad-men, for mis-spending their time in their Health and Strength; and crying out with the greatest earnestness that may be, *Oh! call Time again! call Time again!* Oh! what would we give for a little of that Time, that once we prodigally threw away by whole Days and Nights upon Sin and Vanity! ten thousand Worlds would we give if we had them, for a little Time to make our Peace with God, and to secure to our *Souls* an Eternity of Happiness in another World. But alas all these Wishes at such a time are in vain and to no purpose; for *Death* cannot be brib'd or prevail'd upon, either to depart away from us, or to delay its fatal and deadly stroke.

Awake, Awake, therefore, O secure *Sinners*, be not everlastingly undone hereafter, for want of a little thoughtfulness and consideration now; yet you are in your State of Tryal and Probation for another Life, be not so cruel to your own *Souls*, as not to desire and endeavour their Eternal Happiness, whilst you have time and opportunity; and what you do herein, do quickly, remembering *Death* is continually making nearer approaches to you by every day that passeth over your Heads. *Dis-*
eases

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eases wait but for a Command from Heaven, and they will soon stop your breath, and lay you in the dust; and then all your opportunities of preparing for *Death* and *Eternity* will be over and gone for ever.

But to hasten to a conclusion of the Preface, among many other things, there are these three Designs in this ensuing Discourse concerning *Death*.

First, To awaken Christians unto a deep sense of their own *Frailty* and *Mortality*, and thereby to quicken them to a diligent and speedy Preparation for their latter end, that *Death* may not surprize them (as it hath done thousands already) unawares, whose carelessness and folly herein hath made them miserable beyond all possibility of recovery for ever.

Secondly, To direct Christians how they may so live, as to be always ready and prepared for *Death*, whensoever God shall be pleased to send it; which when once attained, notwithstanding all the Troubles and Afflictions they may meet with in the World to disturb and disquiet them; yet have they always ground for Peace and Joy, because their State and Condition is safe towards God. And,

Lastly, because *Death* in it self hath a dreadful Aspect, and many by Reason of their Fears thereof are all their life-times
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subject unto Bondage. A farther design of this Discourse is to take off the dread of *Death*, by representing unto them a Scripture glass, wherein they may not only behold the pale Face of *Death* without amazement, but may be able to discern something that is amiable and desirable in it. For though *Death* and the *Grave* are frightful and abhorring unto Nature; yet unto Grace (since the undertaking of Christ) *Death* hath lost its grim Visage, and the *Grave* its filth and stench; and both are become, if not very lovely and desirable, because of the weakness of some Mens Faith, yet at least patiently and contentedly to be submitted unto and embraced, Christ having by his *Death*, taken away the sting of *Death*; so that it is not hurtful, and by his lying in the *Sepulchre* hath perfumed the *Grave*, and made it a Bed of Spices unto all Believers.

If now, *Christian Reader*, thou reapest any benefit by the reading of this Discourse, bless God, who hath put such an help into thy Hands, and made it beneficial unto thy Soul, and pray earnestly that many more may be sharers with thee herein, and let the Author also have an interest in thy Prayers, who desires nothing more than that God may have much Glory, and many Souls much Spiritual Advantage hereby.

Farewel.

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An Introduction.

Practical Preparation for Death.

C H A P. I.

Of Death in general. Of the sorts and kinds of Death mentioned in Scripture. Death befalls all Men; there is no withstanding of it, nor any priviledged from it. The time of Death unknown unto us, yet Fixed and Appointed by G O D. Death makes all equal. Sin subjects unto Death.

DEATH is a Subject every Christian should often have in his thoughts, because it is that, unto which he is lyable every moment of his Life; neither the hearing, thinking, nor speaking of it, can therefore be unreasonable at any time: And tho' *Considerations* of *Death* to living Men, are usually most unwelcome, yet are they as profitable to promote the Interest of a Christian as any other; for no Man can *live well*, till he can *dye well*; and no Man is

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2 Of Death in General. Chap. 1.

so prepared for *Death*, as he who frequently imploy's his Thoughts in the *Consideration* of his own *Fragility* and *Mortality*. Indeed Custom hath made it become almost an improper thing, either for a Minister to *Preach* of *Death*, without the Representation of a *Funeral*, or for one Christian to speak unto another of their *Latter End*, without it be in the House of *Mourning*, where an Example of their Mortality is before their eyes: But if the Mouths of Christians were more frequently filled with Discourses of *Death* and the *Grave*, to which all are hastening (but know not who shall get thither soonest) they would find such Benefit and Advantage thereby (in the quickning and hastning their Preparations for their dissolution, that they might always be in a readiness when *Death* shall come) as would infinitely make amends, either for the unaccustomariness of the Work, or whatever pains and labour they had taken with their hearts, to render them fit for the coming of their Lord.

What *Death* is, is as little known unto some, as it is consider'd by most; many take it to be nothing but a Cessation of Life, and all actings in this World; and it were well, if there were not too many to be found, who think this to be all that *Death* doth, and when they are thus dead there is an end of them, making themselves no better than the Beast that perisheth. Happy were it for all wicked Men, if *Death* were no more than this: But though *Death* be a Cessation of Natural Life, and so of all Natural Motion and Action, yet is it more properly a Separation between Soul and Body, whereby the Body becomes a dead unactive thing, because the Soul which is the Principle

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ciple of Life and Operation hath forsaken it; but yet *Death*, as it reacheth not the Soul at all, for that lives after its Separation from the Body, so it shall not for ever keep Soul and Body asunder, but only until God's appointed Time, and then shall the Body be raised again out of the Grave by the mighty Power of G O D, and united to the Soul, to live together in a state of Blessedness or Misery for ever, according to what they have both been and done together in this World, whether it be good or evil.

But because Generals do not so much affect us unto our Edification, I shall be a little more particular in my Discourse upon this Subject; and so I shall speak something concerning *Death*, in a Threefold Sence, as the *Scripture* holds it forth unto us; And so there is,

I. *A Death in Sin.*

II. *A Death to Sin: And,*

III. *A Death for Sin.*

First, There is a *Death in Sin*; this the *Scripture* mentions often, 5 *John* 25. *The hour is coming and now is, when the Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live: So* 5 *Ephes.* 14. *Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, and Christ shall give thee Light. So let the dead bury the dead,* *Mat.* 8. 22. This *Death in Sin*, consists in the want of a Principle of Spiritual Life, being the deprivation of the Life of Grace and Holiness, which is the Life of the Soul, and without which the Soul is dead. And thus all Men naturally are dead; because they are without the Spirit of Christ, which enlivens and

quickens the Soul to all Acts of Grace and Holiness, wherein this *Spiritual* Life doth manifest it self, as the Soul enlivens and quickens the Body unto all Acts of Nature, wherein the natural Life doth manifest it self. That all Men are thus *dead in Sin*, naturally is evident from *Scripture*, 2 *Epkes.* 1, 2, 3. The Apostle writing to the *Ephe- sians*, who by the Almighty Power of God were raised from this *Spiritual* Death, as he tells them in the *First Verse*, *And you hath he quickned, who were dead in trespasses and sins*, that he might be- get in them a grateful Sense of God's Goodness towards them herein: He describes to them their former deplorable Condition; *Wherein*, says he, *in times past, ye walked according to the Course of the World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience*: And in *Ver. 3.* the Apostle puts himself into the Number, *Among whom*, says he, *we all had our Conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature Children of Wrath, even as others*. And then in the fourth *Verse* he gives them to understand, by whom they were raised out of so miserable an Estate; *But God*, says he, *who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickned us together with Christ; by Grace ye are saved*. Now this *Spiritual* Death, or this *Death in Sin*, is the fruit and effect of our first Parents Apostacy from God, whereby we are not only deprived of the Image of God, which is the *Beauty*; yea, the *Life* of the Soul, but are also depraved with the Image of the Devil, which is not only the *Deformity* of the Soul, but even as *Death* unto it. And because this is a *Spiritual* Death,

Death, and reacheth chiefly to the Soul; it is therefore the more hurtful and dangerous, though the effects of it extends it self to the Body also, being that which is the Cause of Natural *Death*; for therefore the Body is a frail dying Body, because it is joyned to a sinful Soul; but this is not all the Mischief it doth; for this *Death in Sin*, unless Grace prevent, is that which ends in *Eternal Death*, which consists in an everlasting separation of Soul and Body from the eternal Enjoyment of God in Heaven, *in whose presence there is fulness of Joy, and at whose right hand there are Pleasures for evermore.*

Secondly, There is a *Death to Sin*; of this we read, *Rom. 6. 2. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?* So in *1 Pet. 2. 24. That we being dead to sin should not live any longer therein.* This *Death to sin* consists in the Spirits indwelling in the Soul, by its sanctifying Operations, enabling the Soul to mortifie sin: Hence the Apostle tells us, *Rom. 8. 13. That if through the Spirit we mortifie the deeds of the Body we shall live.* Such therefore who have felt the Efficacy of an Almighty Power from the Death of Christ, by the Operation of the Spirit, applying of it to their Sou's, to break the power and strength of sin, so that it doth not reign in them, they may be said to be dead to sin, because sin is dying in them: As those Persons over whom Distempers have prevailed so far, that they have lost their bodily strength, that it cannot be recovered again, are said to be dead even while they live; so, tho' sin still live in the godly, by reason of the Remainders of it, yet are they *dead to sin*, because the Power and Strength of it is abated and lessened, the Spirit of Sanctification prevailing dayly over sin, so that it doth not rule and reign as formerly it did.

Thus to *dye to sin*, is to be made alive to God, and blessed are they that have a part in this Resurrection from the death of sin, to the life of Grace; for on such the second Death shall have no Power.

Thirdly, There is a *Death for Sin*, or because of sin. Now this is Two-fold, *Temporal* and *Eternal*.

1. *Temporal Death*: This is contained in that merciful Threatning God gave unto *Adam* in Paradise, to prevent his Apostacy, *Gen. 2. 16, 17.* where, after God had so largely expressed his bounty and goodness unto man, in giving him liberty to eat of every Tree of the Garden, restraining him only by a Command from the Tree of Knowledge, for the Tryal of his Obedience, as *Ver. 17. Of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat*; which he backs with a Threatning in the next Words: *For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely dye.* The Truth of which Threatning the Experience of all Mankind to this day, is a standing Confirmation; so true is that of the Apostle, *As by one Man sin enter'd into the World, and Death by sin; and so Death passed upon all, for that all have sinned,* *Rom. 5. 12.*

2. There is an *Eternal Death* for sin, and this follows upon the *Death* of the *Body*, consisting in the separation of Soul and Body, from the Presence and Favour of God for ever in Hell, and is in part executed on the Souls of wicked Men at Death, and perfectly upon Soul and Body at the Resurrection, when the *Wicked* shall be turned into Hell, and punished with everlasting destruction from

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Power; which in Scripture is called the Second Death. Rev. 21. 8. *Where wicked and unregenerate persons are said to have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the Second Death.* This is the height and perfection of all Misery.

This now is the Substance of what is contained in this Word *Death*, so far as Words can explain it, which if we consider in all the forementioned Sences, it is that which we cannot comprehend; all that hath been said of it, is but like the painting of the fire to the eye, which expresseth not the pain and anguish that is in it, unto the Senses: For if we understand by *Death*, a *Temporal*, *Spiritual* and *Eternal Death*, I may allude to what the Psalmist saith of the Power of God's Anger, *Who knows the Power of thine Anger?* So who knows the dreadfulnes of the Horror and Pain that is contained in thee O *Death*, according to our Fear of thee? So, yea, and much greater, is the Misery which the wrath of God by thee inflicts upon all those that live and dye in their sins.

But though *Death* be thus terrible, yet is it the more common acceptation of it, that chiefly affects the generality of Mankind; for, as for *Spiritual Death*, or *Death in sin*, because of the present pleasures and Delights which bewitch the Senses; this they are insensible of: And as for *Eternal Death*, that is looked upon by many as a *Dream*, or *Notion*, as a thing that may never be, or if among some it be credited for a Truth, yet is it looked upon as that which is a great way off; and if the terror of it doth startle the Consciences of some, yet are they soon quieted with such thoughts as these, Christ dyed for all, and God is a merciful God;
and

8 Temporal Death affects most. Chap. 1.

and so they hope all shall be well with them.

But now for *Temporal Death*, which consists in the separation of the Soul from the Body; this is so much *Death* to them, that they think there is no other but that, at least, they apprehend none so prejudicial to them. This is a Truth so evident, that which way soever they go or turn, objects of Mortality present themselves before their eyes in the *Death of Friends, Relations*, and others, whereby the reigning *Power of Death* over all is visible, sweeping away all Men before it into the Grave, the place of silence and rottenness; yea, themselves are not without some symptoms of their *approaching dissolution, diseases and distempers*, as well as *business and employments*, wasting and consuming their bodies dayly, whereby they may be convinced that they also are made of the same *Mould*, and must shortly be crumbled into the same *Dust* with others. Thus *Death* meeting with them so often, and staring them so frequently in their faces, gives them to understand that there is no way for them to escape its stroke, the thoughts whereof cannot but now and then make them *fear* and *tremble*.

But though nothing be more *certain* than *Death*, yet nothing is more *uncertain* than the Time of *Death*: For though all shall dye, yet all do not dye at the same time, nor after the same manner: To some God gives long Warning, Nature wasting and consuming in them by lingering Distemper; with others God is more quick, shooting them with an Arrow as it were, and suddenly they are wounded unto Death and Destruction; Some *their hoary Heads are found in the Way of Righteousness*, and they come to their Graves in a *good old Age*; others arise early to that height of
Impiety.

Chap. 1. Time of Death uncertain. 9

Impiety, that the Earth groans under the burthen of their great *Wickedness*; and God is so provoked thereby, that he causeth *the Earth to swallow them up quick*; to some the *Promise of Long Life*, made for an Encouragement to Obedience and Holy Walking, is turned into a *Performance*, God satisfying them with length of days, and then leaves them to depart in peace, shewing them his *Salvation*; others God cuts off in the midst of their days, and of their sins also, and they go down quick into the *Grave*, and into *Hell* too. Though the days of a good Man, at the most are but few, yet because of some *special Goodness*, they are often prolonged: so though the days of a wicked Man at the most are but few, yet because of some *special Wickedness* they are often shortened: The Wise Man proves this Assertion, *Prov. 10. 27. The fear of the Lord longeth, or adds to days, but the days of the wicked shall be shortened.* As every Man because he is a *Sinner* shall live but few days; so some shall not live half their days, because they are *Notorious Sinners*. The short of it is this, *Death* doth not always give *Warning*, how many rise in the Morning, that make their *Beds* in the *Grave* before the *Evening*? How many go well to *Bed* at *Night*, whose *Sleep* is their *Death*, and they arise no more until the Morning of the *Resurrection*? How often have we seen many projecting for themselves and theirs, great things in the World, laying house to house, and land to land, that with the *Fool* in the Gospel, they might eat, drink & be merry for many year, when on a sudden, or in that very *Night* their souls have been taken from them? To presume therefore of *Long Life*, and thereupon to neglect to prepare for *Death*, is the greatest piece of Folly imaginable; for scarce is there a

Week passeth over our heads, wherein we may not hear of some or other that are suddenly gone into another World, and that which hath been the Case of others may be ours also. It is the sad Condition of a *wicked Man*, let him *dye* how and when he will, he dies *miserably*; if *Death* cut him off *suddenly*, then he goes down quick into Hell, that Gulf of all Woe and Misery: If *Death* gives him long Warning by a succession of many years distempers, yet all this while he doth but *pine away in his Iniquity*, and encreaseth his Misery when *Death* shall cut him off, and throw him into that place of Torment, the pain and anguish whereof is so great, that it cannot be sufficiently expressed, no not by them that feel it. But now it is the happiness of a *godly Man*, let him *dye* never so suddenly, yet he always *dyes* happily, because he is in a state of *Peace* and *Reconciliation* with *God*; it is true, he may *dye* without a sense and feeling of that *Peace*, and so his passing thorow the Valley of the *Shadow* of *Death* may be terrible to him, but still *God* is with him; and though the eye of his Faith be held, so that he cannot discern him to be *his God*, though his *Rod* and *his Staff* do not comfort him, yet they do support and strengthen him, and as soon as *Death* hath opened his eyes, he beholds the face of *God* to his everlasting joy and satisfaction. Doth *Death* then come *certainly*, and sometimes *suddenly*? It is thy Wisdom, O *Christian*, always to be prepared for it, and then let it come when it will, tho' this Night, thou maist bid it welcome.

But as *Mans Life* is *short and frail*, so is his *Death* sure and certain, for it is the common lot of all Men. Man, saith *Job*, that is all Men, are born to dye; it is the way of all the Earth, it is the

the end of all Men. Who is he that lives and shall not see Death? No Man can redeem his Brothers, no nor his own Life from Death; that he should still live for ever and not see Corruption, such a sufficient Ransome no man can give to God: Christ is indeed become a Ransome for Believers, but it is to deliver them not from the first, but from the second Death; for as to the first Death, it is appointed unto all Men once to dye. Some have a longer time in this world, and others a shorter, but all dye; one goes before, and another follows after; one Man rots in the Grave and makes it empty, that he which is yet alive, may have a place to lye down therein *We all dwell in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, which will shortly tumble down into it. Earthly Tabernacles we have that must be dissolved, and laid in the Earth; here we have no abiding place: Death and the Grave will shortly take all, for all go to one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again, Eccles. 3. 20.* Some are sent before, and others follow after, but all go the same way; some have a long Race to run, others but a short, but Death is at the end of both. To him that is old Death is certainly near, and to him that is young, Death is not far off: He that dyes not till he is old, travels a long way before he meets with Death; whereas he that dyes young hath but a short way to his long home, Death meeting him betimes, but still whither young or old, all must dye, the decree is gone forth, and there is no reversing of it. *There is an appointed time to Man upon Earth, as Job speaks, and when that is expired, Death cuts him off and throws him into the Grave, the house appointed for all living. Death is inexorable, it spares none, and the Grave is insurmountable,*

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riable, it is not satisfied with any, when it hath the *Husband*, it gapes for the *Wife*; when it hath the *Parent*, it gapes for the *Child*; when it hath *one Generation*, it gapes for another; *one Generation* passeib away, and another *Generation* cometh, and the latter crowds the former out of the world. No Man hath a *dispensation* against Death, there must be a *dissolution* of all things, and therefore a *dissolution* of all Men.

No Man hath more *Priviledge* than another against the Sentence of Death; the greatest *Prince* dyes as soon as the meanest *Peasant*: Neither *Power*, nor *Wisdom*; neither *Strength* nor *Rickes*. neither *Beauty* nor *Honour*, nor any outward *Excellency* whatsoever, can protect any against the *stroke of Death*; these things can do much among Men, yea every thing, but they avail not against Death, *powerful* Death despiseth them all. *Power* can do nothing to ward off the stroke of Death from any; where is *Alexander*, and *Cesar*, and all the *Great Conquerors* of the *World*; why they and all their *Greatness* and *Power* are gone down into the *Grave*; and after all their *Conquests* over others, have yielded themselves up as *conquered by Death*. There is no *Title* can be given unto Man, which sets him farther off from Death, than to call him *God*, and this high *Title* God himself hath *honoured*, some Men with, *Psal.* 82. 6. 7. *I said ye are Gods*, but least they should be lifted up with *Pride*; with the same *Breath* he adds an humbling *Consideration* to take down all proud and lofty *Thoughts*, but ye shall dye like Men. *Kings* and *Princes* that are the greatest for *worldly Power*, and have the *priviledge* to be called *Gods*, yet have they not the *priviledge* of *God*, not to dye like men.

No

Chap. 1. None privileged from Death. 13

No Mans *Wisdom* can save him from *dyng*, Death will be too hard for the most *cunning Politician*: *Wisdom* is an *excellent Gift of God*, and renders a Person lovely in the Eyes of all, *it makes a mans face to shine*; it sets a *Glory and Beauty* upon a Mans Person and *Actions*; a Man can hardly give a *greater Commendation* of any Man, than to say he is a *wise Man*: and yet of *Solomon*, not only the *wisest of Kings*, but the *wisest of Men*; it is said, that *he slept with his Fathers, as well as others*; and though he tells us *Wisdom excels Folly, as far as Light excels Darknes*; yet we know *wise men dye, as well as the foolish and brutish person*: We read indeed of a *poor Wise Man*, that by his *Wisdom delivered a City*: but we never read of any that by their *Wisdom* delivered themselves or others from Death: no, *for as there is no work, no devise in the Grave whither we are going*; so is there no *Knowledge or Wisdom* that can keep a man from going into the Grave, Ecclesi. 9. 10.

No Man by his *strength* can overcome Death: Bodily health and *strength* are no defence at all against Death: It is true, they are great *Mercies* where God gives them unto any, a *sickly weakly Man* is burthensome to himself and others, though God heaps upon him other *Mercies* in abundance, as *Wealth, Honours and Relations*, yet he takes little delight in them, the want of *Health* imbitters all; whereas a *Man* that is *healthful and strong*, takes *delight* in every *Comfort and Enjoyment*, though it be even poor and mean in comparison of what others have: but though *health and strength* be so great a *Mercy*, yet can they not withstand the *Power* of Death, they may make a man *dye with strong pains* upon his bed, but they cannot defend him against Death. If God bestow upon any of us a *strong healthy*
Body,

14 None priviledg'd from Death. Chap. I.

Body, it is a great Mercy, and we ought to be thankful for it, but we may be soon laid in the *Grave* for all that. Death should not be a *stranger* to us, because *sickness* and *distempers* are *strange things* to us, for we have not long *Life*, much less can we escape the *stroke* of *Death*, because we are *beauly* and *strong*, for in the fullness of our strength we may be in *Death*; one dyeth in the fullness of his strength, when his *Bones* are full of *Marrow*: As for the *strength* of any *Man*, though he be a *Sampson*, yet this great *Leviathan* *Death* counts it but as *straw*, and the *soundest* and *purest* health, but as *rotten wood*. *David* complains that the *Sons* of *Zerviah* were too hard for him. But there are none such that are too hard for *Death*; *Death* stays not to take men at *advantage*, when they are *weakned* with age and *sickness*, as *Simeon* and *Levy* did the *Schecemites* when they were *sore*, *Gen.* 34. 25. No *Death* can do its work as easily and as *speedily* in *health* as in *sickness*, in *strength* as under *weakness*.

No man by his *Riches* can *protect* himself against *Death*; all the *Riches* in the world are too low a *Value* to *ransome* any from *Death* and the *Grave*. *Solomon* tells us, *Money answers all things*; and indeed *rich Men* can do great things by their *Wealth*; many seek the favour of such, their *Riches* make them many *Friends*: The *Wise Man* tells us, *The rich mans wealth is his strong City*, *Prov.* 18. 11. by reason whereof they trust to their *Wealth*, and *boast themselves* in the multitude of their *Riches*, thinking they are well provided for against all *Evils*: What made the *rich Man* in the *Gospel* else so confidently say to his *Soul*, *Thou hast Goods laid up for many years, eat, drink and be merry*: But *Death* would not be put off so, for that *Night* was his *Soul* taken from him, not-with-

Chap. I. None persvadedg'd from Death. 15

withstanding all his great Possessions. It is in vain to cry out on a *Death Bed* with that wretched *Cardinal Beauford* in *Henry the Sixth Time*, *Wherefore should I dye being rich, will not Death be bribed? Will Money do nothing?* No truly it cannot; for as *Riches profit not in the day of Wrath* to pacifie the *Justice* of an angry God; so neither will they profit in the day of *Death* to bribe that *King of Terrors*.

Beauty, is another outward *Excellency* that many glory in; and indeed it is a great *Ornament*, a Gift of *GOD* and no small one, it is a taking thing. We delight in things that are *beautiful*: *Beauty* to some is a *Portion* among men, to others a *favour* from *God*. It is a *silent Eloquence*, a *tacite Perswasion*, and works much upon some: What is said of the *Church*, *Psal. 45. 11. So shall the King greatly desire thy Beauty*; I know it is spoken there of *Spiritual Beauty*, the *Graces* of the *Spirit of God*, which *beautifie* and *adorn* the *Church* in the eyes of *Christ*; for it is said the *KING's Daughter is all glorious within*: But yet it is true also in some measure of outward *Corporeal Beauty*, it is a *desireable thing*, and may duly be an *attractive* of *Love*; it is that which draws the *Eyes* and *Hearts* of many, tho' often it is an *incentive* to *Lust*, both to *great Men* and to *good Men*. *Solomon loved strange Women*, the *Scripture* saith, *and they turned away his heart from God*; and having sinned severely for it, as a *fruit* of the *sincerity* of his *Repentance*, and to prevent so great wickedness in others he hath left us many *Excellent Cautions* and *Counsels* in *Sacred Writ*, against the *ensnaring Temptations* and *powerful Charms* of *Beauty*. But though *Men* are deluded and deceived by *beautiful Objects* and *Persons*, yet *Death* is not: A *beautiful Face* is as mortal, and as soon, yea sooner
many

16 None priviledg'd from Death. Chap 1.

many times turned into *dust* and *corruption*, than a *face* that is *deformed*. Death regards a *goodly well favoured Joseph* or *Absolom*, no more than a *leprous Uzziah* or *Gehazi*; nor doth it spare a *beautiful Rachel* more than a *blear eyed Leah*: *Favour* is *deceitful*, and *Beauty* is *vain* in this respect, for they profit none in a dying hour; the *beautifullest Person*, and the most *lovely Complexion* is quickly turned into *Paleness* and *corruption*, when once the time of their *dissolution* is come; Death soon making those, that for their *Beauty* and *Comeliness* were most *admired* by others. become most *loathsome* and *intolerable*, and they most *desirous* with *Abraham* to *bury* such *dead* out of their *sight*.

By what hath been said, it appears that all Men, notwithstanding all their *great Attainments* in *Worldly Excellences*, are not *exempted* from *dying*: And as no *outward*, so no *inward Excellency* and *Perfection* can *privilege* any from Death, no not *Grace* it self *Grace* is as *Salt* to the *Soul* to *preserve* it from *Moral Corruption* for ever, but it cannot *preserve* the *Body* from *Natural Corruption* in this *World*: In *Heaven*, where there shall be nothing but *Grace* and *Holiness* in the *Soul* in *perfection*, there, there shall be no *dying*; but here on *Earth*, where *Grace* is *imperfect*, being mingled with *Sin* and *Corruption*, there is a necessity of *dying*. Death is become *domestical* to us, we have the *Seed* of it within us, we carry it *daily* in our *bosoms*; I mean in the *body* of *Sin*, as the *Apostle* calls it; that we carry about with us, which will never be *extirpated* and *destroyed* till the death of the *body*.

All our *Prayers* and *Tears* cannot prevent Death. *Prayer* can do great things, to instance in particulars

Chap. 1. None priviledg'd from Death. 17

culars of its *Prevalency* would be endless. Our Lord himself tells us, *That whatever we ask the Father in his Name he will give it us*, John 16. 23: That is an *Astonishing Scripture*. *Esay 45. 11. Thus saith the Lord, The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come, concerning my Sons, and concerning the Works of my hands command ye me.* As if, saith one, God was as ready to do them service, as if they had him at *their Command*. There is a kind of *Omnipotency* in *Prayer*, and therefore it is said of *Jacob*, that as a *Prince he had power with God, and prevailed*, Gen. 32. 28. And the *Apostle* tells us, *The effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*; how much the *Apostle* could not tell us, but leaves it to every one to make *Observations* from their own *Experience*. But though *Prayer* can do such great things, yet it cannot prevent *Death*: We read indeed that the *Prayer of Faith* doth save the *Sick*; but though it can even restore from a *sick-bed*, yet it cannot raise from a *Death-bed*. Nay, *Christ himself* hath not so *Redeemed* us that we should live for ever, and not see *Corruption*; he hath *Redeemed* us that we shall live for ever in *Heaven*, but he hath not *Redeemed* us that we should live for ever on *Earth* and not dye; no, it was the *Priviledge* of *Jesus Christ* the *Redeemer*, that he should not see *Corruption*, and therefore of him only it is said, *Tbou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption*.

But may some say, this necessity of dying seems not to be *unalterably* imposed upon all Men; for some have lived who never dyed, and some shall live hereafter that shall not dye.

1 Answer: It is true, the *Scripture* makes mention of *Two*, and but *Two*, that lived here on *Earth*, and by special *Grace* and *Favour* were exempted from *Death*, ascending up unto *God*, leaping over *Death* and the *Grave* as it were in their passage to *Heaven*, and they are *Enoch* and *Elias*; concerning *Enoch*, it is said, *That by Faith he was translated, that he should not see Death*, Heb. 11. 5. He was a *Person* eminent for *Holiness*; for it is said, *That he walked with God three hundred years, and obtained this Testimony before his Translation, that he pleased God*, Gen. 5. 22. And being such an *Eminent Proficient* in *Grace*, as that there was none that we read of like him at that time; he obtained such *Grace* and *Favour* from *God*, as none did; for it is said, *He walked with GOD, and he was not, for GOD took him*. O the *Excellency* of *Grace* and *Holiness*, how highly doth it *ennoble* and *advance* a *Man*! *Enoch* walked with *God*, and *God* thinks the *Earth* not good enough for him, and therefore he takes him to himself into *Heaven*; nay, this is not all, so much was *God* taken with the *Holiness* of *Enoch*, that he shall not go to *Heaven* in the ordinary way as other *Saints* do by *Death*, but he shall be translated from *Grace* to *Glory* without so much as looking into the *Grave*. The like we read of *Elias* another eminent and zealous *Servant* of *God*, 2 King. 2. 23. *That he was taken up in a fiery Chariot by a Whirl-wind into Heaven*. So great was his *Zeal* for *God* and his *Glory*, and so highly did *God* esteem it, and him for it. that he must not abide any longer on *Earth*, but be taken up into *Heaven*, and that in no other way, but by a *fiery Chariot*; a *Passage* to *Heaven* that did bear some *Resemblance* to his *Zeal* for *God* while he was here on *Earth*.

The

The *Apostle* also tells us, 1 *Cor.* 15. 51. *That at the last Day we shall not all dye, but we shall all be changed; and 1 Thes.* 4. 17. *We that are alive, and remain, shall be caught up with him in the Clouds to meet the Lord, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.* These Exceptions of some few that have not dyed, nor shall not dye, do not at all make void this general Truth that all shall dye, but rather make for the Confirmation of it. The general Rule or Law saith, all must dye, none escape but by special Grace or Priviledge; and though the Saints that shall be found on Earth at the Resurrection of the dead, dye not, yet they shall undergoe that which is equivalent unto Death, for they shall be changed. Death is call'd a Change; so saith *Job*, *All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change shall come:* And they that are alive at the Last Day, undergoe a Change also: The Change of Death is a putting off of our Mortality, but the Change at the Last Day, is a putting on of our Immortality; The one is a Change by being unclothed, the other is a Change by being clothed upon, but both is a Change: And thus all dye, or shall be changed.

By what hath been said, it is very evident, That Death befalls all men one time or other, sooner or later. But for the Manner, how, or the Time when any shall dye, this is unknown unto any. The *Living* may and do know that they shall dye, but they know not when they shall dye. What our Lord saith of the day of Judgment, is true of the day of Man's Death; of that day and hour knoweth no Man. Many a Man hath been mistaken concerning the purpose of God; I said says David, in my prosperity, that I shall never be moved, but he was mistaken; for he adds in the next words almost, *But thou didst hide thy face, and*
I was

20 Time of Death unknown. Chap. 1.

I was troubled. Much more may we be mistaken concerning the *Time* of our Death. *I said*, says Hezekiah, *in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the Grave; I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the Land of the Living: I shall no more behold man with the Inhabitants of the World.* Good Hezekiah thought there was no way for him to escape Death, but he was *mistaken*; for afterwards he tells us, *God had in Love to his Soul, delivered it from the Pit of Corruption, and he Lived fifteen Years longer after he had given himself over for dead.* A Man may have the *Sentence* of Death in himself. when as to that particular time, *God hath given out none against him:* So on the other hand, the *Rich Man* in the *Gospel* reckons not of Death till *many years* hence, and he is very liberal to his *Soul*, because *God* had been bountiful to his *Body*; he had got a *great Stock of Riches*, and he gives himself a *rich stock of Time.* even *many years*, he resolves to make his *Life* larger, as he had done his *Barns*; and because they are *full of Corn*, he also will be *full of Days*; whereas the *Word* came out against him from *God*, *Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be taken from thee.* and he that before resolved to *Live many years*, could not now *Live* till the *next Morning.* It is our *Wisdom* always to be prepared for Death, but it's more than belongs to us *pre-emptorily* to determine the *Time* of our Death, or the *Length* of our *Days*.

But though the *Time* of our Death be *unknown* to us, yet is it *known* to, and *fixed* by *God*, he hath determined, not only the *Time* when, but also the *Place* where, and the *Manner* how we shall *dye*, with all the *Circumstances* relating thereunto. It is *God* that turns up the *Glass* of our *Time*,

Chap. I. Time of Death Appointed. 21

Time, and puts such a *Measure of Sand* into it, and no more; such a *Measure*, that it may and shall run so long, and no more; that it shall run no longer than his *Appointment*. God speaking after the manner of Men, is said in *Scripture* to have a *Book*, wherein is written down, not only the *Number of our Sins*, but also the *Number of our days*; and as we cannot commit a *Sin* but it is written down in some *Lease of his Book*; so can we not live a day, or hour, that hath not our *Name* written down upon it in *Gods Book*. That some have the *Time of Life* confined only to the dark *Cell of the Womb*, and never see the *Light*; that others are strangled in the place of breaking forth of *Children*, and are only *Causes of Grief* to them that bear them: that others dye in their *Infancy*, without the *Knowledge of good or evil*, and leave only sad *Remembrances* to their *Parents*, that once they were; that others grow up to years of *Discretion*, but are cut off in the *prime* of their days, and in their full strength; and that others live to extream old *Age*, till *Nature* is wholly spent and consumed in them: All this is from the *Appointment of God*; they all fill up the *Number of those Days*, and the *measure of that Time*, that *God* hath allotted to them, and then they depart according to his *Will*. How many have we seen cast upon sick beds, whom *God* hath there visited with strong pains, bringing them so low, that their *Lives* seem'd to be brought unto the *Grave*, and themselves numbred with them that go down into the *Pit*, free among the dead, and as the slain that lye in the *Grave*, given over by themselves, and all others for such; and yet even these *God* hath raised up again, shewing Wonders as it were to the dead, as the *Psalmist* speaks, causing them to arise, and praise his

22 Time of Death Appointed. Chap. 1.

his Name. What's the Reason of all this? Why God's appointed Time was not come, and so Diseases could have no further Power over them: And what is true of Sicknes, is as true of Men, who are but like Diseases, Executioners of God's Decree upon Man; even they have no Power to lengthen Life, or to hasten Death, but what is given them from above. God hath not only set us the bounds of our Habitations, but the bounds of our Living also. Job speaks much to the stating and determining of this Case, Job. 7. 1. Is there not an appointed Time to Man upon Earth: Now in an Appointment of God, there must be a Certainty, or else we make him like unto a mortal Man, that is changeable, which cannot be. Therefore Man having an appointed Time by God upon Earth, he must reach to it, and he cannot go beyond it: But Job further explains it in the next Words, Are not his days as the days of an Hireling? Now an Hireling is one that hath days or time prefixed or set, which he must fulfil, and then he is discharged from his Employment: And so it is with Man, God hath set him his Time, which when he hath accomplished, Death by God's Appointment comes and dischargeth him from his Work; so in Job 14. 5. Job tells us, Mans days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds, beyond which he cannot pass. And all the days of my appointed Time, saith he, will I wait till my Change shall come. Mans Life is appointed and fixed by God, his days are determined by him: We know not how long we shall live, but God doth; he gives us out our days and our months by Tale, the number of his months are with thee. Whatever Man is Lord of, he is not Lord of his Time. We cannot dispose of one minute for our selves or others.

Chap. I. Time of Death Appointed. 23

others. We live not by our own Wills, if we did, who would dye? Nor do we live at the Will of others, for who of us then would live, or at least live long? But we live at the Will of God, Tenants we are at his Will, he gives us the Lease of our Lives, and for what Years he pleaseth; He is Lord of Time, and therefore he hath Power to appoint to one man a greater, to another man a lesser measure of Time, as seems good unto him. David therefore, when his Enemies were taking Counsel against him to take away his Life, bears up his Spirit with this as a comfortable Consideration, *My Times are in thy hands O Lord*, Psal. 31. 15. The Jews we know design'd the Death of Christ a long time, but they could not accomplish it, till his hour was come, and therefore when he was brought before Pilate to be judged, says Pilate to him, *Knowest thou not that I have Power to Crucify thee, and have Power to release thee*; No, says Christ, thou hast no such Power of thy self, neither couldst thou have any such Power, except it were given thee from above. What Christ said of himself, is true of every Man, he lives not after, nor dyes before his hour is come: Our Friends cannot lengthen our days, nor can our Enemies shorten them; no, it is God that holds our Souls and Lives in being, and when he pleaseth, and not before, we return unto our Dust. God hath determined our days to us, and God keeps the reckoning of our days for us; and if, as our Lord tells us, *That a Sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father, and that the very hairs of our heads are all numbred*: Surely then the days of our Lives are numbred. The hairs of the head are the meanest part of us, and indeed but a stringy Excrement, and there are such numerous multitudes of them, that it is a kind
of

24 Death observes no Order. Chap. 1.

of a *Wonder* that they can be *numbred*, or any *Account* kept of them, but yet to shew that the *Providence* of *God* extends its self to the *least things*, it extends to the *numbring* of our *hairs*, much more than to the *numbring* of our *days*: But,

Though *Death* observes the *Order* and *Appointment* of *God*, yet it observes no *Order* among men: It *fears* none for their *greatness*, nor *s pares* none for their *goodness*, nor *despiset* any for their *lowness*. Though *Chri* ians are *Souldiers*, and in a continual *Warfare* with their *'piritual Enemies*, obeying the *Commands* of the *Captain* of their *Salvation* while they live, yet do they observe no *Order*, nor keep to any *Rule* in *dying*. The *Old* go not always before the *Young*, nor the *Rich* before, and the *Poor* following after. *Death* hath no *Master* of *Ceremonies*, but it takes *promiscuously*, here a *Child*, and there a *Man*; here a *Rich Man*, and there a *Beggar*; here a *strong Man*, and there a *weak Man*; here a *Master*, and there a *Servant*. The *Law* of *Nature* saith, that a *Man* in his *full strength* is not so likely to *dye*, as one that is *wither'd* with *Old Age*; it sets *Death* further off from one whose *breasts* are full of *milk*, and their *bones* moistened with *marrow*. The *Law* of *Nature* saith, O *Death*, go to the *wrinkled face*, to the *dry bones*, to those, the *Infirmities* and *Weaknesses* of whose *Age* are so many and so afflictive, that they seem to have no *Pleasure* in their *Lives*, but are *desirous* of thy *presence* and *company*. O *Death*, for their *ease* and *relief*: But O meddle not with this *goodly young Man*, or that *beautiful Woman*, alas, they are but now in the *flower* of their *days*, and in the *prime* of their *years*, and therefore spare them. But *Death* will not *Answer* nor *Regard* these

these *Requests*; for *Death* observes not the *Law* of *Nature*, but the *Appointments* of *God*, who is the *Lord* of *Nature*. We see it therefore daily, *Death* knocks as often at the *young Man's door*, as at the *old Man's*; and as frequently carries the *strong* and *healthful Man Prisoner* to the *Grave*, as the *weak* and *sickly*.

And as there is no *Order* observed in *Death*, so is there none in the *Grave*. *Death* and the *Grave* are the two great *Levellers* of *Mankind*. While *Men live*, there is, and there ought to be *distinctions* among them, *God* hath appointed it so, and *Men* ought to observe it, acknowledging the *power* and *greatness* of those that are in *high Places*: For as the *Scripture* observes, as there is one *Glory* of the *Sun*, and another *Glory* of the *Moon*, and another *Glory* of the *Stars*, for one *Star* differeth from another *Star* in *Glory*, 1 *Cor.* 15. and 41. And as there is difference in the *Celestial Glories*, so also is there in the *Terrestrial*; there is a *Glory* belonging unto *Kings*, there is a *Glory* belonging unto *Noble-Men*, and a *Glory* belonging unto *Common People*; all have not, nor ought to have the same *Glory*, but one *Man* differs from another *Man* in *Glory*. But when *Death* comes, there is an end of all these *distinctions*; the *Grave* mingles the *Dust* and *Bones* of the one with the other: We cannot there distinguish the *rich Man's Dust*, from the *poor Man's*; nor the *Bones* of *Kings*, from those of their *lowest Subjects*. *Rich Men* indeed descend with greater *Pomp* into the *Grave*, and are buried in more *eminent Places*, and under more *stately Monuments*. But though great *Men's Tombs* differ from their *Inferiours*, yet their *Bones* do not; but the *Worms* feed upon all alike. While *Men* walk upon this *Dust*, their *distances* are many; but when they lie down in the *Dust*, they are all alike. *Civil Differences*

rences then all cease, and Moral Differences only take place; and according as Men have been or done, good or evil here, so shall they be differenced for ever hereafter.

If it be demanded now, how Man came to be mortal;

I answer, Not by Creation; for he was created, as in a holy, so in a deathless State. Immortality was a part of God's Image at first imprinted upon Man. God's Image being defaced by Sin, Mortality took place. Man never had an Impossibility not to die, but he had a possibility not to die, and that was the State of Man's Immortality. In his State of Innocency, his Life was made as long as his Obedience. In God's dealing with our first Parents, he back'd his Command with the threatning of Death, Gen. 2. 17. *Of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Our first Parents disobeyed this most righteous and equitable Command of God, and thereby brought Death upon themselves and all their Posterity: For though God formed Man, as the Holy Story tells us, out of the Dust of the Earth; yet so long as Man stood, he never said, to Dust thou shalt return; but only put in a supposition or threatning, that in case he did fall, he should surely die. But when by Sin he had fallen from God, then he hears what he must be, *Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return.* So that the Justice of God stands engaged to inflict Death upon every Transgressor. And to this the Apostle ascribes it, Rom. 5. 12. *By Sin Death entered into the World, and so Death passed upon all, because all have sinned.* Death therefore seizeth upon us not as we are Men, but as we are Sinners. To die, is a penalty inflicted upon Man for Sin. If Man had not sinned, he had not been under

under a necessity of dying; but by sinning, he became mortal. Sin therefore is not only the Sting of Death, but the Cause of Death: It is that which gives it not only its Terror, but its very Being; and therefore it is somewhat remarkable, that among all the Creatures in the World Man only is termed mortal. It is certain other Creatures decay and perish as well as Man; yet among all perishing things Man only hath the wretched Denomination of being mortal, and there is good Reason for it; since he alone of all perishing things, being created immortal, voluntarily subjected himself unto Death, and by his own default brought upon himself the Name of Mortal, as a brand of perpetual Infamy.

C H A P. II.

Thoughts of Death ought to be laid to heart by all. It is a Christian's great Wisdom, and ought to be his greatest care to provide for Death. The great folly and danger of neglecting or delaying such Preparations upon hopes of long life. Sicknes a very unfit time for such a work. Men very prone to put off thoughts of Death and Preparation for it, with the Reasons thereof. Time short, though long enough for our great work, if diligently improved. Excellent Effects that the Consideration of our latter end would produce. It is a very comfortable thing to have all things set right betwixt God and the Soul before a dying hour. Time ought therefore to be valued, and our days wisely to be numbered.

THough the Life of Man be very short, frail, and uncertain; though Death hath nothing of a peradventure in it, but is that which will most certainly over-take all Men; none being able to withstand it, nor any privileged against it. Yet how strangely besotted are the generality of Men in putting far from them this evil day; as if because God hath not told them the exact time when they shall die; they were not bound to take any notice that they shall die? But doubtless this is as great a piece of Folly as most we can be guilty of: For why doth

doth God so often visit us with Pains and Distempers upon our Bodies, which threaten Death? Why are we so frequently called to the house of Mourning, to accompany others unto their long home? Is it not that hereby we might reflect upon our own Mortality with the most serious thoughts, by beholding the Death of others? Doubtless much of a Christian's Life, should be spent in the thoughts of Death, and in a right numbring of his days, so as to lay to heart his latter end: It is not that which should be forced upon us by some unexpected Providence of God, in snatching some away out of the World by some sudden stroke, by the hearing whereof we are amazed, and by whose Funeral the thoughts of Death force themselves into our Minds: but we should make it the Matter of our daily Meditation, the thoughts of which we should accustom ourselves unto; and that not only when with old Barzillai we have not long to live, when by Reason of Age our Strength is departed, when Infirmities and Distempers upon us are so many, that we can taste no sweetness in any outward Enjoyments; but even with Joseph of Arimathea, who made his Sepulchre in his Garden a place of Pleasure: so should we in the midst of all our Delights and Recreations, and when we are best able to relish what sweetness there is in them; even then should we check all such Inclinations in us by accustoming our Minds unto the frequent, serious, awful thoughts of our latter end. For this we have the practice of our blessed Lord, who when he was transfigured before his Disciples, the Glory whereof was so great, that St Peter's weak Eyes were not able to behold it; yet he then thought no Subject so fit to be discoursed of, as that of his Death which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, Luk. 9. 31. It is therefore a wicked Proverb that is frequent in

the Mouths of many, *They thought not of such a thing no more than they thought of their dying Day.* Alas poor foolish Man, what, not think of thy dying day? Dost thou know what thou sayest? Is the day of thy Death of no more Concernment to thee than so? What, not so much as to think of it? Dost thou not know, *Oh vain, trifling Man,* that thy dying day will be to thee the beginning of a state of Happiness that shall never cease, or an entrance on a state of Misery that shall never know an end? And what, is it not worth thy bestowing a thought upon it? For Shame, O foolish Man, (for I scarce know how to call thee, *Christian,*) thy talk is so profane, and thy Life so loose, that it savours little of Christianity; to be sure not of the power of Godliness, if thy ways be according to thy Words. It is said of the Old World, that they eat, they drank, they married, and were given in Marriage until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and they knew it not, till the Flood came and swept them away. What, was the Old World destroyed, because they knew not of the coming of the Flood? No, Noah was a Preacher of Righteousness, and doubtless he had told them of it many a time; but yet, it is said, they knew it not till the Flood swept them away; that is, they knew it not, so as to consider, and make Provision against the Deluge came; so they knew it not. So is it now with many in this Case; they are not undone eternally, by not knowing they shall die; for there are none how profane and Atheistical soever, but will own that they must die; but this ruins them for ever, that they consider it not so as to make timely provision for a dying hour.

The Care and Wisdom of a Christian discovers it self much by his Preparations for Death. The Prudence of a Man appears in nothing more than in

in making a *good choice* for himself: Now there are *two Estates* that do abide all Men, a *State of Happiness in Heaven*, and a *State of Misery in Hell*; and these are both of them *eternal*. *Life* is the *time* of our *choice*; *Death*, which comes at the close of our *days*, discovers what our *choice* hath been: The daily *Improving* of our *Time* in the *preparing* our *Souls* for our *Dissolution*, is a *good Evidence* of a *wise* and *happy choice*. *Job* complains of some that *die without Wisdom*; the *Reason* is, because they live not *wisely*, that is, they do not with *Care* and *Wisdom* *prepare* themselves for *Death*. This *Wisdom* is wanting in most Men; in regard whereof we may say of them, as the *Psalmist*, *Psalm 49. 20.* *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the Beasts that perish*: That is, though in their *Lives* they be Men of great *Honour* and *Excellency*; yea, though *wiser* in their *Generation*, as our Lord speaks, than the *Children of Light*: Yet they *perish* like a *Beast*; for he that *dies unpreparedly*, *dies foolishly*. For the *Wisdom* of a Man *discovers* it self much in *serious Meditations* of, and *diligent Preparations* for his great *Change*. This was that which God so *passionately* wish'd for his *People* of old, *Deut. 32. 29.* *Oh that my people were wise that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.* And the truth of it is, it is a great piece of *Wisdom*, and a *high attainment* in a *Christian*, with *Care* and *Prudence* to *consider* of and *prepare* for his *latter end*; yea, so great is it, that it is too *wonderful* to be *gained* by *Art* or *Study*, we must get it upon our *knees* by *Prayer*. Holy *David* therefore, as one *convinced*, both how *necessary* and *profitable* this *Wisdom* would be; and being *sensible* also of his own *inability* for to *attain* it, makes it his *earnest Prayer* unto God, that he would *instruct* him herein, *Psalm 39. 4.* *Lord, make me to know mine end,*

and the measure of my days, what it is that I may know how frail I am. As if he had said, Lord, I have taken this and that and the other thing into my thoughts (for possibly his mind had been in the dust, and he had been handling the Clay, out of which he was taken) yet by all these Considerations of the Natural Constitutions of my Body, and my Subjection thereby unto Death, and the Grave, being a poor feeble Creature, I cannot bring my Heart to be so thoroughly sensible of my frailty as I ought: Lord, therefore do thou make me to know it. The same Holy desire we find breathed out, by Moses, in Psalm 90. 12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto Wisdom: as if he had said, Lord, I have been at the work my self, I have endeavoured to number my days, to count over the time of my life, but by what I can do, I cannot tell how long or how short my life will be; it is true I can tell to threescore or fourscore years, which usually is the longest term of Man's life, and I can tell no farther, but yet for all that I cannot apply my heart unto Wisdom; this I must have from thee; therefore, O Lord, teach me. Though we need but little Arithmetick to number our days Naturally, yet we need a great deal of Grace to number them Spiritually. Dying is a great work, and requires great care and circumspection. We can die but once; how careful should we be then that we die well? Man had need be very exact in doing that which he cannot do a second time, and such is the work of Dying. An Error in Death is like an Error in War, which we cannot commit twice! O what Reason have we then to be careful that we do not Err at all, where it is impossible of Erring again? Actually to Err twice, is more sinful, but not to have a possibility of Erring twice is most dangerous. We transgress the Laws of living a thousand

thousand times over, but the *Laws* of dying, no Man ever *transgress'd* a second time. And that we so often *transgress* the *Laws* of *Living* is an *aggravation* of *sin* upon all Men; and that we can *transgress* the *Laws* of *Dying* but once is the *Seal* of *Misery* upon most Men. How should we then cry unto God for *Wisdom* to make us careful always to live so that we may be prepared for a dying hour?

It now the *Wisdom* of a *Christian* consists in making preparations for *Death*, then those *Persons* are guilty of great folly and run desperate hazards who upon hope of long life, neglect such Preparations. Yet if a *Minister* in a great *Congregation* should go from Man to Man, and ask them whether they are prepared to die, would not, must not most, if they will speak the *Truth*, be forced to say they are not? if upon this you deal faithfully with them, and shew your selves a true *Friend* to their *Souls*, laying before them, their great folly and danger herein, by such *Strong* and *Powerful* *Convictions* that their *Consciences* are forced to yield to you, and themselves brought with *Tears* to confess their foolishness; hereupon what *Resolutions* do they take up, and what *Promises* do they make, binding their *Souls* to God by many *Vows*, witnessed with many *Prayers* and *Tears*, that they will make it the business of their *Lives* for the time to come, to prepare for *Death*: but alas, how soon do these seemingly strong *Resolutions* die and come to nothing? and *Death* that under those *Convictions* they feared was ready to seize upon them every moment, is now as far from their *Persons* they hope, as he is from their thoughts. He threatens them not as formerly, and therefore they fear him not as formerly. *Distempers* of *Body* which sometimes frightened them into an awe and fear of *Death* are now departed from them, and so is *Death* with them, at least as

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to their *Apprehensions*. They have now a *Healthful strong Constitution of Body*, and what doth this *Prognosticate* but *long Life* and many *days* yet to come they hope? Doth not the *Word of God* say that the *Age of Man* is *Threescore years and Ten*, and many times by *Reason of Strength*, which they feel no want of, it is *Fourscore*; and for their parts they have not *lived above Thirty or forty years* as yet, and therefore surely they have a great deal of *time* still to come, and then they will *bethink* themselves of *dying*, and that will be *time* enough. But O *foolish Man*, what *vain confidence* is this in which thou *trustest*; who gave thee this *Knowledge* of thy *Life* and *Time*, that thou art thus *strangely bold and presumptuous* as if thou hadst the *Lease* thereof in thine *own hands*, and at thine *own disposal*. Indeed we read of good *Hezekiah*, that upon his recovery from a fit of *Sickness*, God gave him a *Lease* of his *Life* for *fifteen years*, but who ever had the like. *Scripture* and *Experience*, speak of nothing more plainly than the *Frailty* and *uncertainty* of *Man's Life*. It is therefore compared to the *Wind*, to a *Leaf*, to a *Flower*, to a *Shadow*, to a *Vapour*; by all which the *Spirit of God* sets forth to us, the *Frailty*, *Brevity* and *uncertainty* of *Man's Life* endeavouring hereby to take us off from all foolish *conceits* and *vain hopes* of *long life*; for what is our *Life*, but a *Vapour that appeareth for a while and then vanisheth away*? a little *breath* turned in and out by the *Nostrils*, a *narrow passage* that is soon *stopt* and we are gone. We have no *Assurance* of our *Life*, no not for a *moment*, *Death* lies in *Ambush* every where for us. We have a *Proverb*, that the *young Man may die*, but the *old Man must die*; whereas *Observation* will inform us, that *incomparably more die young than old*. And did we but seriously consider, by what small pins

this

this *Frame* of Man is held together, it would appear no less than a *Miracle*, that we live one day or hour to an end, so many dangers, so many *Casualties* do we pass through every moment : and are the thoughts of *Death* and thy preparation for *Death* and that *Eternity* that follows it, to be put off to such *uncertainties*. Are not all thy days on *Earth* few, and thou hast spent some of them already, and possibly those few days of thine that are already past and gone, are all the days thou hast to pass : say not then to God, to thy Conscience, or to others that put thee upon a present preparation for *Death* and *Eternity*, I will do it to-morrow, or hereafter ; boast not thy self, O vain Man, of to-morrow, for thou knowest not even what this day may bring forth to thee ; possibly this day may bring forth thy death, and where then will be thy to-morrows preparation for it?

But suppose *Death* should not cut us off suddenly, but give us warning of its approach by *Sickness* and *Distempers* of Body ; yet how unfit a time is that to prepare for dying ? for *Diseases* sometimes come with that *Violence*, that they quickly take away Mens Senses and Understandings, and having lost the use of their Reason they are fit for nothing. And halt thou, O presumptuous sinner, that trullest to a Sick-bed preparation for *Death* and *Eternity*, any Assurance, that this shall not be thy State and Condition then ; nay, thou hast just cause to fear that thus it shall be, because in the time of thy Health and Strength when God called after thee to look towards himself, and to mind thy Everlasting Concernments, thou wou'dst not : therefore now that thou art come to lie upon a *Death-bed*, and thy Conscience is awakened with horror, because of thy former negligence, and the prospect of thy future Misery ; that now the *Violence* of thy *Distempers* should

should be so great, as to render thee *incapable* of such a *Work*. Or if God should be so *merciful* to thee, (which thou hast no reason to expect) as to *continue* to thee the use of thy *Reason* and *Understanding*, so that being apprehensive of the *approach* of *Death*, and *Conscience* also be *awakened* and *terrifying* thee with the *fears* of a *strict* account, that thou art going to give unto the *Great God* of all that thou hast done in the *Body*, whether it be good or evil; dreading also what the *Consequences* thereof may be; by reason of thy *negligence* and *carelessness* in the time of thy *Health* and *Strength*, to make preparation for thy *Eternal State*. It being thus with thee, and thine *Eyes* being *opened* to see whither thou art going, thou art very *desirous* it may be now to *set* thy *Soul* in order, because thou *fearest* thou *shalt* die, and *not* live. Yet thy *Sickness* may be so *sharp*, and *pains* may come upon thee with that *Extremity*, that all thou canst do will be little enough to *mind* thy *Body*. God may *visit* thee with such *strong* pains upon thy *bed*, as may make thee *cry* and *roar* with such *horrors*, as may make thee a *terror* to thy *self* and to all that come near thee; so that all thou canst do for thy *self*, or what *others* can do for thee, may not be able to give thee any *ease*, or *relief*. And is this the *time* thou *choosest* to *prepare* thy *self* for *Death* and *Eternity* in? What, when thou canst *hardly* tell how to *turn* thy *Body* upon thy *Bed*, for a little *ease*? Dost thou think this a *fit time* to *turn* thy *Soul* from *Sin* unto *God* in? Suppose thou wert now cast upon a *Sick-bed*, and thy *Body* full of *pains*, if any one should come and put thee in mind of some *Worldly Business*, wouldst thou not think it a *good excuse*, to say, I pray trouble me not now, because I am *Sick*; Speak to me of these things when I am *Well* again? And dost thou think it *Reasonable* to be

be excused from *Worldly Business*, because thou art Sick; and yet dost thou Judge it the *best time* for thee to be employed about thy *Spiritual concerns* when thou art sick, yea when thou art dying? Surely *desperate folly and madness* is in the hearts of these Men, who thus live, and thus think to die. Alas, the *time of Sickness* is a time of *spending* not of *getting*; it is not a *time to gain Evidences for Heaven*, but to *use* them, and to take the *comfort* that *flows* from them. Alas poor Man, thou shouldst now be *solacing* thy Soul in God as thy Father reconciled to thee in Christ; and having made it the business of thy life to *serve* and *please* him sincerely, though not without weaknesses and imperfections; thou shouldst now be able to say, thou hast through *Jesus Christ* received the *Atonement*, and art continually *rejoycing* in hopes of the *Glory* of God; the *comfort* whereof should be so great, as to *swallow* up all thy *Bodily pains* and *distempers*, and carry thee *cheerfully* through the *Pangs* of *Death*; so as that thou shouldst be able to say, *Blessed be God I am not sick, for mine Iniquities are forgiven me.* This should be thy *State* and *Condition* upon a *dying bed*. But if thou hast thy *work* to do, thy *Preparations* for *Heaven* and *Eternity* to make when thou art upon thy Sick, yea thy *Death-Bed*, Oh how miserable, I had almost said, how *desperate* is thy *Case*! How many *Gracious Souls* have found it *work* enough upon a *Death-bed* to attend the *Pains* and *Distempers* of their *Bodies*? and believe it, O *Sinner*, who ever thou art, thou wilt find it a *great truth*, that to *suffer* and be *sick* is *work* enough for any Man at *one time*.

But suppose God should be so *Gracious* to thee, as by some *lingering* and *gentle sickness* for many days, yea *months* together, give thee warning of thy *approaching Dissolution*; and thy *Conscience* also.

also should be *awakened* to stir up in thee some *serious thoughts* and *endeavours* to *prepare thy self* for thy *departure* hence ; yet since thou hast so often *turned thy back* upon God, and *refused to hearken* unto those many *Calls* that he hath vouchsafed unto thee in the *time* of thy *life*, to be *Wise* for thy *self* by *considering thy latter end*, but thou wouldst not ; how justly may he now *reject* thee at the *time* of thy *death*, though thou *follow'st* him with never so many *earnest cries*, yea and *Tears* also : That is a most dreadful place of *Scripture*, *Oh* that it were *Engraven* with a *Pen of Iron*, and with the *Point of a Diamond*, upon the *heart* of every *careless negligent sinner* ! *Proverbs* 1. from 24. to 31. *Because I have called and you have refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no Man regarded. But you have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my reproof. What then O dreadful, O Soul confounding words ! I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh. When your fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind. When Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Well, but what follows upon this ? will not God be Entreated ? cannot Prayers and Cries do any thing with God ? No, for it follows in the next words ; Then shall they call upon me, but I will not Answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me ; for they hated Knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : They would none of my Counsel, they despised all my Reproof. What's the Conclusion of all this ? why, that we have in the next words, therefore shall they eat the Fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own Devices. Whoever thou art that Readest these Lines, if through thy carelessness this should ever come to be thy Case, because thou wilt not take warning, I have only this doleful*
word.

Word to leave with thee for thy serious thoughts and meditations, and from my Soul I wish it may do thy Soul good ; this State, that I am speaking of, will be a State so full of dismal anguish, and perplexing horrors, that no words are able to express the misery of it.

Moreover, a *sick-bed Repentance, and Preparation* for thy *Eternal State* is very *questionable*. How hard a matter wilt thou find it then to satisfy thy own *Conscience*, or to convince others, that what thou now dost is done in the uprightness of thy Heart, and not in *Hypocrisie* ? Alas the present feeling of the *wrath* of God, and the future expectations of *fiery indignation* in *Hell*, may constrain thee unto all that thou dost. It was a very sad *Relation*, (and I wish the reading of it may do some Soul good) which once I received from the Mouth of an eminent *Godly Minister*, of many years standing in the *Ministry* : I have, says he, been called to visit abundance of *Persons* upon their *Death-beds*, who reflecting back upon the *wickedness* of their *lives*, have professed a great deal of *grief and sorrow*, and made many *Promises* what they would do, and how they would *live*, if God would restore them to their *health* again ; but among them all, says he, thus dying, I could never yet meet with one that could give me *good ground* to believe the *Happiness* of their *future state* and *condition* in another *World*. O let the consideration hereof cut thee to the Heart, O thou slothful and delaying Sinner.

But if thou shouldst be *sincere* then in thy *turning* unto God, and thy *Preparations* for *Death* and *Eternity*, such as are sound and not *hypocritical* and *feigned* ; and God should be *graciously entreated* of thee in this last and *greatest hour* of thy *distress* ; yet
will

will it not wound and pierce thy Soul to consider what Peace of Conscience, what joy in believing, what comfortable testimonies of God's loving kindness to thy Soul thou hast lost; the sweetness and delight whereof would have born up thy Soul in a dying hour, and have carried thee triumphantly through the gloomy valley of the shadow of Death, so that thou shouldst have feared no evil. But now instead thereof, by reflecting upon the former course of thy life, which hath been a continual trade of Sin and Wickedness, whereby God hath been dishonoured and provoked by thee all thy days, he now appears to thee as thy dreadful Enemy, visiting thee with nothing but terrible Rebukes of horror and wrath in thy Conscience: And though God may have mercy upon thy Soul eternally, and the state of thy future Happiness may be sure and certain in it self; yet thy passage to it may be very uncomfortable; insomuch that as to thy sense and feeling thou art but leaving Earth to go to Hell, God's bringing thee to Heaven being by the Gates thereof.

But though delays in this case are dangerous, and sick-bed preparations for Heaven and Eternity at best, but uncomfortable; yet how prone are most Men to put off the thoughts of Death and their Preparations for it? Solomon tells us, Eccles. 7. That it is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting, for this is the end of all Men, and the living will lay it to Heart. We ought indeed daily to familiarize Death to our Souls, by frequent thoughts and meditations of it; but when we go to the House of Mourning, to see any laid in the Grave, this is a special proper time and season for the living to lay Death to Heart; and it is probable if Men will at any time lay Death to Heart, surely they will do it at such a time as that is; for when will Men think

think of *Death*, if not when they see it before them? It is true, some do lay *Death* to *Heart*, when they are called to such *Solemnities*: O then they have a *fit* of grief upon them; but as soon as they have *vented* their *Passion*, the *fit* is over, and so is their thoughts of *Death* with it. And though *Solomon* seems to *promise* for the *living*, that in the *House of Mourning* they will lay it to *Heart*; yet there are very many, that have been so often there, that they are grown familiar with *Death*; but in a *bad senec*; for the frequency of such occasions, have worn off all impressions of *Mortality* from their *Hearts*; so that now they can go to the *Grave* again and again, and not be affected with it; they look upon it as a matter of *Custom* and *Formality* for *Men* to *die* and be buried, and when the solemnity of the *Funeral* is over, the thoughts of *Death* are over with them; and as soon as they can get out of the sight of the *Grave*, their *Preparations* for the *Grave* are out of their *Mind*. The *Holy History* tells us, in 2 *Sam.* 10. 12. that when *Amasa* was slain by *Joab*, and lay wallowing in his *Blood* in the midst of the high way, every one that came by stood still, being astonished to behold so dismal a *Spectacle*: But afterwards we read, that *Amasa* was removed out of the *High way* into the *Field*, and a *Cloth* cast upon him: And what then? why, the *Holy Text* tells us, *All the People* went on after *Joab*. So is it with us, if we behold a *Person* lying upon a *death-bed*, gasping and bleeding, and with dying groans ready to expire his last breath; here we make a *stop*, and pause with some astonishment at so sad a sight; but let a *Cloth* be thrown over the *Dead*, and the *Corps* drawn aside into the *Grave*, and covered with *Earth*; presently we go to our employments and trading, and possibly some to their sinful Practices again; as if the last *Man* that should die were now buried.

Now

Now the *Reasons* of this *stupidity* and *carelessness* may be such as these.

First, *The great Love and Affection Men have to the World, and the things thereof.* These take up all the *thoughts* and *time* of some Men, so that they have no *leisure* nor *desires* to *think* of *Death*, or to make *Preparations* for another *Life*. The *Pleasures*, *Honours*, and *Profits* of the *World* are *fine things* in their *Eyes*, they *please* their *Fancies*, and so *possess* their *Minds* with a *fond desire* of *long Life*, that they may *delight* their *senses* in these *earthly things*, and these *ardent, earnest desires* of theirs will let them think of nothing less than *many days* to *satisfie* their *sensual part* in these *delightful enjoyments*. If we should look *abroad* into the *World*, we may easily *perceive* which way the *Inclinations* of most Men carry them; How *eagerly* do some *pursue* the *Pleasures* of the *World*? How *unweariedly* do others follow the *Profits* of the *World*? And how *impatiently* do others *thirst* after the *Honours* and *Preferments* of the *World*, as if their *Happiness* were *wrapp'd up* in these *outward Accommodations*? Whereas our *Lord* tells us, that *a Man's Life consists not in the abundance of the things that he enjoys here in this World*. And by these *things* the *thoughts* of *Death* are not suffered to come into *Men's Minds*; and if they will crowd in upon them sometimes, they are soon cast out again as *unwelcome Guests*, that come to disturb their *Peace*.

Secondly, *Men put off the thoughts of Death and Preparation for it, because they generally look upon it as that which is afar off*: And this is the *greatest Sottishness* in the *World*. If you go to those that are
young,

young, and tell them that they must *die* ; it is true, say they, and *Old Men* ought to *consider* it, and *prepare* themselves for it ; but surely for us there is no such hast yet. Alas, they think they must of right and course live till they are *Aged*. If you go to *Old Men*, and tell them that they must *die* ; alas, their *Age* tells them so, they cannot *deny* it ; but though God visit them with *weakness* and *infirmities*, the *Companions* of *Old Age*, which *impair* their *Health*, and *waste* their *Strength* continually ; yet they *Hope* these *decays* are not so great, nor so violent, but that they may yet *weather* out a few years more ; those that are *healthful* and *strong* think they need not *prepare* for *Death*, till they have *warning* given them of its approach by *Sickness* : And those that God doth *summon* to the *Grave* by *Sickness* and *Diseases*, they have a *secret hope*, that because they have formerly *escaped* from other *distempers*, therefore they may do so again. Thus now most Men *thrust* *Death* from them, and put the *evil Day* *afar off*. And it is a *true saying*, that usually the *hopes* of a *long life*, is the *cause* of an *evil life* ; for because Men *hope* they shall *live long*, therefore they are *careless* how they *live* at present, presuming they may have *time* enough to *repent* and *amend* all hereafter.

Thirdly, Men put off the thoughts of *Death*, because such apprehensions bring a great deal of *Fear* and *Terrour* with them. *Death* is that which Nature abhors to think of ; it cannot endure the thoughts of *Separation*, between those *near* and *dear Companions* of *Soul* and *Body*. Oh to think that this *Body*, that is here pamper'd and made so much of, should become *vile* and *loathsome* in the *Grave*, laid in a *Bed* of *stench* and *rottenness*, covered with *Worms*, mouldring away into the *dust* of *Oblivion* ! This is a *sad* and *melancholy* subject for our thoughts to muse upon ;

on; O this *King of Terroures, Death!* How *unwelcome* is he unto the *thoughts* of most men; especially *considering* him as having his *sting* in him, which is *Sin*: O then it is no wonder that those who are *Conscious* to themselves of *condemning guilt*, dare not think of *standing* before the *dreadful Tribunal of God*, whither *Death, God's Serjeant*, will bring them; but cry out with *Horroure*, *Who among us can dwell with devouring Fire!* *Who among us can dwell with everlasting Burning!* O it is no wonder that such put far from them the *thoughts of Death*, because they know that *day*, whensoever it comes, will be to them an *evil day*.

But if Men would seriously consider, how short their time in this *World* is, the *hazard* and *dangers* they run by their *delays* would be prevented. Surely they that have a *lively sense* of the *things of Eternity* upon their *Hearts*, that know their time here to be but *short*; and believe that upon the *improvement* of this *short time*, their *misery* or *happiness* for *Eternity* doth depend, will not be so foolish as to put off their *Preparations* for *Death* and *Eternity* till hereafter, when they have no *assurance* of their *lives*, no not for a *moment*. This is so *weighty* a *consideration* that if it were laid to *Heart*, would prevail with all Men that have the right use of their *Reason* and *Understanding*: Our *time* in this *World* is *short* and *uncertain*, yet is our *work* very *great*: We are but of *yesterday*, and possibly before to *Morrow* we may not be, and the *Great God* hath *suspended Eternity* upon the *improvement* of this *moment*; a few *days*, or a few *hours*, nay, possibly a few *minutes*, will determine our *everlasting State* and *condition*; and according as we are in *spending* of them; so shall our *Doom* be either to *Eternal Happiness*, or to *Eternal Misery*; and why, Oh why should

should our *precious* and *immortal* Souls be so vile in our *Eyes*, as to lose them by *stoth* and *carelessness*? Why should any of us be such *Fools* and *Mad-men*, to hearken to the *solicitations* of the *Flesh*, or to the *allurements* of a *flattering* *deceitful* *World*, so as to put off and neglect our *everlasting* concerns? Should we not rather say to the *World*, or whatever it be that would hinder us in our *great work*; Stand off, for we are *working* for *Eternity*, an *Eternity* that is but a few days, it may be but a few *hours* hence; a *boundless*, a *bottomless*, *endless* state and condition, into which we know not how soon we may be cast; and therefore we have no *time* to dally in, or to *trifle* away.

But though our *Time* be *short*, yet is it *long enough* for our *great Work*, if *diligently improved*. We have so much *time* allotted us, as will serve to do our *real business* in, and to answer the *ends* of *living*. A *Christian's Work* in this *World*, is not to *incumber* himself with many things; or to vex himself about the *accomplishing* of *great designs* for the *World*, to get a *great Estate*, to *abound* with *Pleasures*, to grow *great* in the *esteem* of *Men*; these things are as much *below* a *Christian's Work*, as they are *below* his *Reward*: And whoever thou art that *designest* these things for thy self, thou maist not have *time enough* for the *attaining* of them; but yet *Heaven* may be got in that *time* that the *World* cannot; thy *Salvation* may be *wrought out*, *God* may be made *propitious* to thee through *Christ*, the *one thing needful*, the *better part* that shall never be taken away from thee; these may be *obtained* by thee, and *secured* to thee as thy *Portion*, in that *time* that *God* hath given thee, if thou art *diligent* in *improving* of it: Do not *sigh* and *mourn* therefore that thou canst *number* no more *days*; do not *murmur* and

and complain at the *shortness* of thy *Life*: What wouldst thou do if thy *days* were more? What *use* wouldst thou make of thy *time*, if it were longer? Is it that thou mightest *save* thy *Soul*, and make thy *Peace* with *God*, that thou desirest more *time*? Why thou needest not more *time* for these *purposes* than *God* hath allotted thee already; thy *Life* is long enough if thou didst *use* it aright. It is not a *little time* that we have; but it is a little that we *use*: *God* hath not given us a *little*, but we throw away much. Our *Portion* is not *small*; for what we are to *Trade*, but our *mispendence* is exceeding great. *God* is not *niggardly* and *sparing* in what he hath given us; but we are *prodigal* and *profuse* foolishly *wasting* away our *hours*; they that have, *abundance* of *time* given them, through their *Imprudence* and *Mispendence* are utterly *undone*; and then they whine like *Beggars*, as if they had had no *time*; whereas those that have *less* time than others, that make these *Complaints*, have so improved that *little*, that, *Thanks* be to *God*, they are *rich* in *good Works*, and say it is *enough*, let *God* call for them when he pleaseth.

If now upon the *serious Consideration* of the *shortness* of *time*, any shall be *stirred* up and *provoked* to a *diligent Improvement* of it, so as to *prepare* themselves for their *latter end*, they shall find such *Benefits* as these redounding to their *Souls* thereby.

First, It will be a great means for the *Prevention* of much *Sin*. He that shall seriously consider with himself, *I must shortly die*, how soon I know not, will presently *reflect* upon himself under a *Temptation* to *Sin*, and say, Why should I *commit* this or that *Evil*, which if it be not a means to *hasten* my *end*, yet will certainly make it more *uneasie* and *uncomfortable*, when I come to lie upon a *Death*.

Death-bed, and consider what I have done *amiss*: Possibly I may die to-morrow; for *who knows what a day may bring forth*? O why then shall I venture to commit that evil to-day, which will be as *Gall and Wormwood*, and like *Bitterness and Vexation* to my Soul then! Would I do it did I believe that I were to die to-morrow? Why should I then do it to-day, that know not whether I shall live till to-morrow; for it is possible this may prove the last day of my Life?

Secondly, He that shall seriously consider his latter end, and shall diligently employ himself and his time accordingly, shall find his life most comfortable and contentful, and his Death most easie and peaceable. As for the Contentment of Life; if you look abroad among Men in regard of their outward Estate and Condition, you shall find that that Man, who by his Industry hath got to be *aforeband* in the World, hath much more Peace and Quietness in his Life, than he that is *behind-band* or gone back, and is continually struggling with Necessities and Wants. So is it in Spirituall also; he that hath been wise in improving the Opportunities that God hath vouchsafed him for the getting of Grace, and making his Peace with God through Christ; he that hath done thus, a great part, yea a chief part of the business of his Life is done; he is prepared in some measure for all Conditions the wise Providence of God may dispense to him, be it Sick-ness or Health; be it Life or Death; for he is *aforeband*, as it were, in the business of his everlasting Concerns; so that if God lengthen out his Life in this world, he carries on his great work and business unto greater degrees of Perfection, not only without Trouble and Disturbance, but with great Ease and Pleasure: Or if God see good to cut short his days, and call him to give an Account of his Talents,

48 *Evil of not considering our latter end.* Ch. II.

lents; his great business is not now to go about, but his Accounts are ready, and he in some measure prepared to give them up unto his Lord and Master; and, O blessed is that Servant whom his Master when he comes shall find so doing.

But this is not all, the frequent considering our latter end brings Ease and Peace in Death; it abates, if not removes the fears of it. Death in Scripture is called the King of Terrors, and many times the Fear of Death is more terrible than Death it self: Now that which makes Death thus terrible to us, is the knowledge of our Guilt, and the Apprehensions of God's Wrath and Displeasure justly deserved thereby; this gives Death its Sting and Terror. Now he that makes it his business to live in constant Preparation for Death, by Acts of Repentance for former Sins, and by frequent Applications of the Blood of Christ to his Soul by Faith, he removes both the Sting and the Fear of Death at once: For how can he be afraid of Death, whose frequent Thoughts and Meditations of it make it familiar to him: And as for the Sting of Death, that cannot hurt him neither; for where Sin is truly repented of, it is really pardoned; and Sin being pardoned, the Power and Sting of it, whereby it hurts and wounds others, is taken away as to him; so that though others are held in Bondage under the fear of Death all their lives, and feel the deadly Sting of it when they come to die; yet he fears not either the suddenness of its Approach, nor the power of its Sting.

Now dying being a work of great weight and difficulty, it is not only of great Concernment, but it will be full of Sweetness and Comfort to us when we come to lie upon a Death-bed, to be able to say, that all things are set straight and right between God and our Souls: Such Persons are no small Proficients in Grace and Holiness, but are strong in the Grace.

Ch. II. Evil of not considering our latter end. 49

Grace of God which is in Christ Jesus. Now how sweet and comfortable such a State and Condition is, will appear by a Comparison between it and the contrary. Take a Person that hath lived a careless, negligent Life as to the Concerns of his Soul, that hath consumed his days and hours in a forgetfulness of God and of Eternity; yet wallowing in worldly Pleasures and Delights every day. Take also another Person, who hath lived as one that was designed for another Life hereafter; and therefore all his Care and Industry hath been laid out in making Preparations for an eternal State. Suppose now that these Persons were both lying upon their Death-beds together: Oh, what a difference must there needs be between them at such a time! Go to the sick Bed of the former; O the Grief, the Fear, the Shame, the Horrour and Perplexity that he is now in, upon a serious Reflection how he hath spent his time! O his Negligence in the Concerns of his Soul! How burthensome is it to his Thoughts! O his carelessness for Eternity! How full of Bitterness is the Remembrance of it to his Soul! O his forgetfulness of God and Heaven! With what insupportable Anguish and Vexation doth it wound his Spirit! Under the Fears and Horrors whereof he is even distracted, and ready to give up all in Desperation of Soul. But now if you go to the sick Bed of the other, O the Calmness, the Serenity, the Peace, the Joy that his Soul is now fill'd; yea, even ravish'd withal, in the Remembrance of those former days and hours that he hath spent in Praying, in Hearing, in Reading, in Meditation and Self-examination, that he might be satisfied upon sure and Scripture-Grounds and Evidences, that all Breaches and Differences occasioned by Sin, between God and his Soul, were made up, and he accepted into the Divine Love and Favour, through Jesus Christ the great; yea, the only Peace-maker.

between God and Man : So that it being thus with him as to the *State* of his *Soul* towards God ; his *Peace* being made in *Heaven* by the *Blood* of *Christ* ; with what *rejoicing* doth such a *Soul* go from *Earth* to *Heaven* ! What an *abundant* entrance is administered unto it into *Glory* ! Such a one passeth in *Triumph* into *Heaven* , with *Visions* thereof in his *Eyes* , carrying the *sweet Prelibations* and *Fore-tastes* of *Heaven* with him in his *Soul* to *Glory* , where he is to enjoy the *fullness* thereof with *God* and *Christ* for ever . O who of us would not wish to die this *Death* of the *Righteous* , and that our last end might be like his ! But there must be first a living the *Life* of the *Righteous* in a *serious* , *diligent* , *Preparation* for *Death* , before there can be a dying the *Death* of the *Righteous* .

For this end therefore our *Time* ought highly to be valued , and our *days* rightly to be numbred ; and *Time* is then precious with us , when we will not easily part with it , but are careful to improve it to the best *Advantage* . *Time* is so precious , and of that great worth and value , that all things in the *World* are mean and despicable compared with it ; the price of it is above *Pearls* , *Diamonds* and precious *Stones* cannot equal it . *Time* cannot be bought for *Gold* , neither can there be *Silver* enough weighed for the price thereof ; it is more to be desired than *Gold* , yea , than much fine *Gold* : The *Merchandize* of *Time* is better than the *Merchandize* of *Silver* , and the *Gain* thereof than fine *Gold* . *Time* is more precious than *Rubies* ; yea , all that we can desire of worldly things is not to be compared to it . *Man* knoweth not the price of *Time* , neither is it to be found among the *Living* . Every thing in this *World* may have its due worth and value set upon it by *Man* ; but time cannot ; it is an unknown , invaluable *Treasure* .

Ch. II. *The great worth of Time.* 51

But it is the *Misery* of Man that our greatest *value* of *Time* is known only upon a *Death-bed*, or in *Hell*. As *Job* speaks of *Wisdom*, the same may be said of *Time*; *Death* and *Hell* have heard the *Fame* and *Excellency* thereof. Wouldst thou, O *Sinner*, know how *precious* a thing thy *time* is, go and hear the *Dolors* and *Groans* of an *awakened Sinner* upon his *Death-bed*, when he is *crying out* in the *Horror* of his *Soul*, Oh how have I *lost*, how have I *misspent* my *precious time*! Oh what would I not *do*, what would I not *give*, what would I not *suffer*, for a little of that *Time*, whole *days* and *months* whereof I have formerly *prodigally* thrown away upon *Sin* and *Vanity*! Couldst thou, Oh *Sinner*, lay thine *Ear* to *Hell* for a little *while*; what wouldst thou *hear* there, but a *Company* of *damned Souls* *lamenting* and *bewailing* the *loss* of their *Time*, and *bitterly cursing themselves*, not that once they had so much *Time*, nor that they *spent* so much of it in *Praying*, in *Hearing*, in *Reading*, and in other *holy Duties*; but that they were not *good Husbands* of their *Time* when they had it; that they were not *wise* to *redeem* their *Time*, but that they *spent* it so *lavishly*, *wasting* so much of it upon *every thing* and *person*, as if it would never have an end? But now their *days* are *past*, their *time* is *gone*; and though they would *give*, or *be*, or *do* any thing for the *Recovery* of a few *Moments* of that *time* again, yet it will not be *granted*.

And hast thou, O *sinner*, a *Jewel* of such *inestimable value*, intrusted in thy hands by the great *God*, the *improving* whereof is as much as thy *Soul*, and may be as much *worth* to thee as *Heaven*, yea, as *God* himself is; and what hast thou not a *heart* to *consider* it? O how ought it to be *lamented*? and if it were *possible*, even with *Tears* of *blood*, that most men live as if *time* were a *burthen* to them, as if they were so *weary* of it, that they knew not how to

get rid of it; hence it is, that there are so many say, they know not what to do, as if their *time* lay as a *Drug* upon their hands; a *Speech* that an honest *Heathen* would have been ashamed to utter, and yet how often is it in the *mouths* of many that would take it *very ill*, and think themselves much *wronged* if they were not called *Christians*. But what if God should say, I will *ease* thee of thy *Complaint*, and *Swear* concerning thee that thy *time* should be no more; may he not say so, dost thou not *deserve* it? hast thou not *provoked* him to it? and if he should, how *Just* and *Righteous* would he be towards thee, tho' thou wert *Eternally miserable* in *Hell*, bemoaning for ever, the *mispence* and *loss* of that *time*, which when thou wert here on *Earth*, thou couldst not tell what to do with.

The way now to *prevent* such an *inconceivable*, *irreparable loss*, and to *improve* this *Talent of time*, that is of such an *inestimable* value, is *carefully* and *frequently* to *number* our *days*. Now this *numbering* of our *days*, or taking an *account* of our *time*, lies not in a *bare numbering* how many *days* the *life* of *Man* is made up of, for who is there that cannot do that? they are so few that even a *Child* may *number* them, nay the *number* of them is cast up to our hands already by the *Psalmist* in the 90th *Psalms*, *The days of our years, are threescore years and ten, and sometimes by reason of strength they are fourscore.* This is the *common Age* of *Man*: our daily *Experience* confirms it; for it is the *common Discourse* of all *Men*. But this is not the *numbering* our *days* *aright*, but the *right numbering* our *days* is as the *Psalmist* *speaks*, when we so *number* our *days* as to *apply* our hearts unto *Wisdom*. So that *numbering* in this *sence*, implies *Consideration*, and may import as much as *Meditating*, on *casting* of it in our *minds*, by a *serious thinking* with our *selves*, what our *days* are, and for what

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Ch. II. *Our days are to be numbered.* 53

end our life and time was given us by God, that we may accordingly improve it. But more particularly, the numbering of our days may referr to the time past, and to the time to come. We must number the days that are past. We find David thus Reflecting upon his days that were past, and he gives us this account of them, that they were vanished to nothing, Psal. 102. 3. My days are consumed like smoke. Now in numbering our days that are past, we should consider, both how much of our time is past, and also to what end and purpose it hath been spent. Some of us have lived twenty, thirty, it may be forty years in the World; God hath herein out-done our own and others Expectations in his Bounty and Liberality to us, giving us so large a time and space of Repentance: now the great Goodness and Mercy of God to us herein, should be thought upon with Admiration and Thankfulness. Could any of us be secure of the continuance of our lives so long again, as Hezekiah was of his Life for fifteen years more; what a vast while should we reckon it thither? what a shew would forty years to come make at a distance? how numerous would the days and hours appear to us, and what a mercy should we account it, and how thankful should we be for it? Why the forty years mercies that thou hast enjoyed, but are now gone and past, ought to have as grateful a sense and acknowledgment in thy Soul, as the hopes of forty years Mercies for the time to come, if thou couldst be assured of the Enjoyment of them. But this is not all; in the numbering of our days that are past we must consider, how and after what manner we have spent them? for doubtless it is a very great fault among Christians, that they skip over such a great part of their time, and never consider what they have done. The great work of a Christian is to advance the Glory of God,

54 *Our days are to be numbered.* Ch.II.

and to *work* out his own *Salvation*; but if we look into the *Lives* of most men, how little are either of these *great ends* of *Life* promoted by them? *Sin* and *Wickedness* abounds so that it cannot be numbered; who among us can *Reckon*, how many *Sabbaths* he hath *prophaned*, how many *times* he hath taken the *Name of God in Vain*, how often his *Tongue* hath uttered *lies* and *falsehood*, how frequently he hath *wronged* his *Neighbour* by *deceit*, *Fraud*, *Injustice*, or *Oppression*, how many *times* he hath *abused* the good *Creatures of God* by *excess* and *intemperance*; who knows how much *Vanity* hath filled his *Thoughts* and *Mind*, who can tell the *number* of his *idle* and *unprofitable words*? who knows the *Errours* of his *Heart* and *Life*? Well might the *Psalmist* cry out, *Who knows how oft he offends*? Our *Sins* are more than can be numbered; But now as for our *Duties* and *Services*, how few, how poor, how empty have they been? what *Witness* can our *Families* or *Closets* give in for us, of the *pouring forth* of our *Souls* unto *God in Prayer*, with *Faith* and *Fervency*, with *Sighs* and *Groans* that cannot be uttered? How little *Zeal* have we *shown* for *God*, or for the *Promoting* his *Worship* and *Service* in his *House* or in our own *Houses*? How often have we *heard* the *Name of God* *Blessphemed* by *Hellish Oaths* and *Curses*, and his *Honour* and *Glory* wounded, by *Reproaches* and *Scandals*? And O what *sinful silence* hath possessed us, as if we were either *ashamed* of our *Holy Profession* or were *Cowards* and durst not give a *Reproof* boldly for fear of *offending* of those, who fear not to *offend* *God*, though at the same time we offend both *God* and our own *Consciences* also. O how little have we lived to the *Honour* and *Glory of God* in our *Relations* and *Employments*, exercising *Patience* under *Afflictions*, *Meekness* under *Wrongs* and *Injuries*,

ries, *Humility* under *Disgraces*, denying our *selves* under our *Enjoyments*, *Temperate* in the use of *Creature-Comforts*, *Obedient* to all the *Will* of *God*, not *murmuring*, nor *repining* under any *Dispensations* of *Providence*, *Thankful* under all *Mercies*, and *Fruitful* under all *Ordinances*. In a word denying all *Ungodliness* and *worldly Lust*, living *Soberly* and *Righteously* and *Godly* in *this present evil world*, being *Fruitful* in every good word and work, that the *Faces* of our *Conversations*, may so shine before others that they may see our good works and *Glorifie* our *Father* which is in *Heaven*.

And thus numbring the days that are past, we should consider both how much of our *Time* is past, and what improvement we have made of it, in answering the ends for which it was given us. But then we must also number our days that are yet to come, and though the *Life* of *Man* in general be *threescore years and ten*, or *fourscore*; yet none of us in particular can be assured that we shall live to the one, or to the other; and therefore our *Account* as to the time to come is soon cast up, for we can here reckon of no more than the *present time*. What number of days or years *God* hath determined to any of us is a *secret* kept close from us, and that which we shall never understand but by the *Issue* and *Event* of his *Providence* towards us hereafter.

The *Book of Life*, in which our days are cast up by *God*, is written in a *hand* that is not legible to us. Our account therefore, as to the time to come lies in a short compass, and contains no more than the *present time*; we cannot justly reckon of one day, though we are foolishly and sinfully presumptuous of many days; our account therefore should be rather how short our time is, than how long it is.

Holy *David* under the sense of *God's displeasure* makes use of this as an *Argument* for the obtaining his

his favour towards him, that God would consider how short his Time was, Psal, 89. 47. Oh remember says he, how short my time is. How much more then should we urge it as an argument upon our selves unto all holy diligence and faithfulness in the discharge of all those duties God requires of us; because our time is short. There are two things Christians should always keep an account of; the one is the number of our Sins, and the other is the number of our Days; the numbring of our Sins, should make us humble, and the numbring of our days should make us diligent. He that shall keep an account of his Sins, and shall believingly consider that they are more than the hairs of his head, more than the sand on the Sea shore, or the Stars in the Firmament; even such a multitude, as St. John speaks of in another case, which no Man can number; and that there is not the least of them but deserves Hell; he that shall seriously make this the matter of his daily thoughts and meditations; O how low and vile will this make him in his own Eyes? and though he doth not walk in the bitterness of his Soul every day because of the hopes of pardoning grace through Christ; yet it may make him walk humbly with God all his days. So he also that shall keep an account of his days, and shall seriously consider how short the Life of Man is in general, and his own in particular, and withal remembers how many of his Days are past already, and how much of his Time is spent and gone, and also how unprofitably; the remainder whereof must therefore be very short, and is also very uncertain, because he hath no assurance of any but what is present. He that shall weigh these things in his most serious Thoughts, Oh how diligent will this make him in the Concerns of his Soul.

C H A P. III.

The State of Man considered under Death. What it is to wait for Death, with Reasons why we must prepare for it. Dying is an important, difficult Work. Death continually hastning towards us, yet few consider how suddenly themselves or others may Die. Death comes violently to Wicked Men, yet no Man dies before his time; however in Scripture some are said so to do. An Exhortation to prepare for Death, with Motives to quicken Christians thereunto, and Directions to help them therein.

HAVING spoken something of the *Life of Man*, as it hath Relation unto the Subject I am speaking to, which by Reason of Sin is become *short, frail, and uncertain*; I shall now consider the *State of Man under Death*, which is the end of his *Temporal*, but the *beginning and entrance* upon his *Everlasting State*; which that *Christians* may with the more profit and advantage meditate upon, I shall reduce all that I have to say of it unto three particulars. The *State of Man under Death* is a State that admits of no returning unto *Life*; a State that admits of no amendments; and a State that is fixed and determined.

First, The *State of Man under Death* is a State that admits of no returning unto *Life* again. When once the *Sun* of this *Life* is set, it will arise no more upon thee for ever. *Are not my Days few, says Job*

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Cease from me, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return. And Job 10.20. When a few Days are come, says he, I shall go whence I shall not return, Job 16.22. That's a strange Journey indeed that admits of no return. That which pleaseth us while we live, is the hopes of returning to our Homes again; but when we die, we take a Journey whence there is no returning; for there is no recovery out of the Grave, when once we are Dead. Indeed it is a fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, to believe the Resurrection of the Dead; for the Scripture tells us, that all Men shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to receive according to what they have done in the Body: Now if there be not a Resurrection of the Dead, how can this be? therefore our Lord tells us plainly, John 5. 28. that the hour is coming when all that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice and shall come forth; but this time is not yet come, and till this time comes, the sentence of Death is irreversibile upon all. And though God hath already stretched forth his hand to the Grave, for the raising of some Persons from the Dead miraculously; yet, as those few that have escaped Death, make no breach upon this general Truth, that all must Die; so it doth not at all infringe this general Truth, that God will not now by the manifestation of the same miraculous Power, raise any from the Grave, because some have been raised and recovered out of it.

Secondly, The State of Man under Death admits of no amendments or alterations. Life is the Time of Working, in Death we receive the Reward of our Work. Our Lord tells us of himself, I must Work the Works of him that sent me, while it is Day, for the Night comes wherein no Man can Work, Joh. 9. 4. Death puts an end to all Works, whether

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whether they be *Natural, Civil, or Religious*. There is no *eating or drinking*, nor any *pleasure* to be taken in any *outward enjoyments* in the *State of Death*: there is no *buying*, or *selling*, or *getting gain* when we are *Dead*; nay, *Death* puts an *end* to all *Spiritual Works*; those *Duties* that upon *Earth* were the *Saints exercise*, in the *Grave* there is an *end* of them; there is a *dying and perishing* for ever, in respect of *Faith* and *Repentance*, in respect of *praying* and *hearing the Word*, these are *Heavenly Works*; but the *Time* for the *performance* of them is while we are here upon *Earth*. None of these *Labours* are in *Heaven* or in *Hell*, no nor in the *Grave*, whither we are all going. In *Heaven* there is *nothing but rest*; in *Hell* though there be no *rest*, yet there is no *labour*: In *Hell* there is *nothing but Wages*, in *Heaven* there is *nothing but Reward*; our whole *Work* lies in the *few Days* that are on this *side* both. What we do for the *obtaining* of *Heaven*, or for the *avoiding* of *Hell*, it must be *done now*, for there is no *Work*, no *Device* in the *Grave*, whither we are all going.

Thirdly, *The State of Man under Death is a State that is fixed and determined*. He that *dies* under the *Guilt* of *Sin* shall never have it *forgiven* him, The *Blood* of *Christ* that was *appointed* for the *Pardon* of *Sin*, and for the *Justification* of a *Sinner*, shall never make God *propitious* to a *Soul* that *dies* under the *Guilt* of *Sin*; though that *Blood* now *speaks better things* than the *Blood* of *Abel*; and *crying aloud* to *Heaven*, nay in *Heaven*, for *Mercy*, hath obtained *Pardon* and *forgiveness* for *thousands* of *Souls* now in *Glory*; yet hath it no *virtue* in it that shall be *applicabie* to any *Sinner* for the *remission* of his *Sins*, when once the *Sentence* of *Death* is *executed* upon him. There is a *Sacrifice* appointed

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by God, to take away Sin in *this Life*, even the *Blood of Christ* that cleanseth from all Sin; and now he intreats and beseecheth Sinners to come unto him, that they may have *Life* by him: but those that will not now accept of his Gracious offer, but continue in Sin, and Disobedience all their days, and die under the Guilt thereof; there remains no more Sacrifice for them, and it is impossible they should ever be Pardoned, because the Sufferings of Christ were never Ordained as an Expiatory Sacrifice for their Sins. His bleeding and dying upon the Cross will do them no good at all now; the Time and Season of Mercy and Grace with them is gone and past for ever. Nay, let me add a dreadful word unto all such, instead of any Benefit and Advantage that will come to them by the Blood of Christ, it is that which cries loudly against them for the Wrath and Vengeance of God to fall upon them to Eternity. Besides, he that dies under the guilt of Sin, dies also under the filth and pollution of Sin, from whence he shall never be cleansed. We read in Scripture of a Refiner's Fire; but Hell Fire is not of this Nature, it enrageth the Sinner, but it doth not Refine him. No, that Sin or Holiness that accompanies Men out of this World, shall abide with them for ever; he that dies in a State of Sin, his guilt remains upon him for ever: there are no Seasons of Grace to be enjoyed in another World, nor are there any Operations of the Spirit of God, vouchsafed to Renew and Change Men hereafter. Whilst we are in this World, though the Law Condemns us for our sin and guilt, and the Gospel disowns us for our filth and pollution; yet even such as we have been Washed, have been Justified, have been Sanctified; and so may we, for the Blood of Christ is still a Fountain open to wash in for Sin and for uncleannesses; and the Infinite though Provoked Majesty

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jeſty of Heaven condeſcends ſo low as to entreat us with more Earneſtneſs and Affection to pity our own Souls and accept of a Pardon, then Guilty Condemned Sinners deſire to obtain it: but when this Life is at an end, there ſhall be no more Offers of Mercy, but the Blood of Chriſt, ſhall then be a Spring ſhut up, and a Fountain Sealed that none can waſh in it and be Cleanſed. Death Seals up the State of a Sinner for ever. You know what Abraham tells the Rich Man in Hell, in Luke 16. 26. *Between us and you ſays he, there is a great Gult, fixed, ſo that they that would paſs from hence to you cannot, neither can they paſs to us that would come from thence.* The State and Condition that Men enter upon after Death, is fixed and unalterable. Therefore O Sinner what thou doſt for God, for Heaven, for thy Soul, do it quickly, for this is the only Time and Seafon for thee to work in, and as thou now ſoweſt ſo thou ſhalt Reap for ever.

The State of Man under Death being thus, it greatly concerns all Men to wait for Death. Job tells us, it ſhould be his Practice, Job 14. 14. *All the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my change comes.* Now waiting as it relates unto Death may include three things. Meditation, Expectation, and Preparation.

First, Meditation. He that waits for the Accompliſhment of any Worldly Buſineſs, eſpecially if it be of Concernment to him, how buſie will his Mind and Thoughts be in muſing upon it? He now that is waiting for the coming of Death, conſidering both the certainty of it, that it will come, and the uncertainty of it, when it will come, and believes withal that Eternal Happineſs, or Eternal Miſery, will be that State to which Death will bring him, cannot but have his Thoughts much taken

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ken up about it. This will make a *Soul Truly and Spiritually Wise*, and therefore the *Psalmist Prays*, *Lord teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.* He that is *truly Wise* will *Meditate of Death*, and he that *Meditates of Death*, will be *truly Wise*. The more we *number our Days* and *think of our Time*; the fewer *Sins* we shall have to *number*; for as a *Copy* is then *safest from blotting* when *dust* is *thrown upon it*, so are we from *Sinning*, when we remember we are but *Dust*.

Secondly, *Waiting includes in it Expectation.* That which we *wait for*, we are in *Expectation of*; and that *Man*, may be said to *wait for Death*, that in *every Action* of his *Life*, in *every Alteration* of his *State and Condition*, saith to himself, *well, I must Die*; when though his *Bones* are full of *Marrow*, though *Riches* come in upon him like a *Flood*, yet saith he, *I must die*, I have no *abiding Place* here, I am but a *Stranger and Sojourner* in this *World*, as all my *Fathers* were. I have now *Wife and Children, Friends and Lands*, but I cannot *enjoy* any of these for *ever*; no nor my *Life* it *self*, for I have but a *Lease* of it, and that but a *short* one too, which will soon *expire*. I *expect Death* daily, even in the midst of all my *Enjoyments*; I am but a *Steward* of all that I *have* here, and I must *shortly* be called to an *Account*; such and such are gone before me, and I am *following after*. The *other day* *Death* snatched away such a *dear Relation* from me, this *day* it hath *seized upon* such a *Friend and Acquaintance*, and to *morrow* the same *Messenger* may come for me. It is that I *expect*, and therefore I *wait for it*.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, *Waiting* includes in it *Preparation*. He that *waits* for *Death*, ought to be *preparing* for it. This now is *exceeding Requisite*, because it is above the reach of *Words* to *express* how much depends upon this *Preparation*; it is that our *whole Life* should have *respect* unto; every thing that we do, ought to have a *tendency* in it to make *Death Comfortable*. But of this *Preparation* for *Death*, I shall speak more *hereafter* in its *proper place*.

This *waiting* for *Death* by way of *Meditation* on it, by way of *Expectation* of it, and by way of *Preparation* for it, is very *necessary*, considering what an *Important* difficult *Work* the *Work* of *dying* is; and this will appear if we consider two things. *First*, what *Death* is. *Secondly*, what *Death* doth. *First*, what *Death* is, and here are three things considerable. *Death* is a *Deprivation*, *Death* is a *Desolation*, and *Death* is a *Destruction*. All which make *Death* terrible, and the *Work* of *dying* difficult.

First, *Death* is a *Deprivation*. It *strips* us of all those *Comforts* that in this *World* did *Refresh* us. *Friends*, *Relations*, *Lands*, *Houses*; these have often *delighted* us while we *live*; yea it may be too much, by setting our *Affections* *inordinately* upon them, and now what *Grief* of *Soul* doth it *create* to us, *violently* by *Death* to be *torn* from them? but *part* we and they *must* whether we will or no, and that for ever. *Job* tells us, *We came naked into the World*, and we shall *return naked* out of it. The *Apostle* indeed seems to intimate as if some *Men* in our days could *scarcely* believe it, and therefore to beat *Men* off from such a *conceit*, he tells them, 1 Tim. 6. 7. *We brought nothing with us into this World*, this is true, and all *Men* will grant it; and says the *Apostle*, *it is certain* we shall *carry nothing* out of it. *Death* makes all lie equal in the *Dust*.

Secondly, Death is a Dissolution. In *Life* Soul and Body are *united*, and live lovingly together; there is a *near union* between them; a *union*, which because of their long *Acquaintance* and *Co-habitation* together, is become so dear, that no *union* can be more *desirable* as to the *continuance* of it, nor no *union* more *dreaded* as to the *Dissolution* of it, except it be the *Spiritual union* between *Christ* and the *Soul*. There are *several kinds* of *unions*, and generally *Love* is the *ground* of them all. There is an *union of Friendship* between one *Friend* and another, whom *Love* hath *united* so *strongly*, that they *seem to Act* as if one *Soul* animated them both; so *Jonathan* loved *David* even as his own *Soul*: This is a *strong union*. There is also a *Relative union* between *Parents* and *Children*; so *Jacob* loved *Benjamin*, so that it is said his *Life* was *bound up in the Life of the Lad*: This is a *stronger union* than the former. There is also a *Marriage union* between a *Man* and his *Wife*, and this is a *stronger union* than either of the former, *Man* and *Wife* making but *one Flesh*, as the *Scripture* speaks. But yet there is a *union* that is *stronger* and *nearer* than any of these *Unions*, and that is the *Union* between *Soul* and *Body*, for these two make but *one Person*. Now all *dis-unions* are *uncomfortable*, and some *dis-unions* are *dreadful*; and as some *dis-unions* are *dreadful*, so those *dis-unions* are *most dreadful* which *rend* that from us that is *nearest* and *dearest* to us. For *Friends* to be *parted*, never to see the *Faces* of one another again, this is *sad*. And therefore when *St. Paul* was taking his leave of the *Saints* in *Macedonia*, in *Acts* 20. 38. it is said, *They fell on his Neck and kissed him, sorrowing most for the words that he spake, that they should see his Face again no more.* But it is *sadder* for *Parents* and *Children* to be *dis-united*.

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united. David found it so, when he cryed out so Passionately for his Son, 2 Sam. 18. 33. O Absalom my Son, my Son, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my Son, my Son. It is yet more sad to have a dis-union made between a Man and the Wife of his Bosom, when God shall take away with a stroke the desire of his Eyes, one that hath been a meet and fit Yoke-fellow in the Lord; whose Eyes can refrain from weeping, or their Hearts from bleeding under such a sad stroke of Providence. But yet there is a dis-union, that comes nearer than all these, and that is a dis-union between the Soul and the Body, those two Old, Sweet Intimate Companions, born together into the World, and who have lived in sweet Society together all their Days; for Death to come, and make a Dissolution between two so near and so dear together, by a violent rending and tearing the Soul and Body asunder: Oh this is exceeding sad and dreadful indeed, and that which must needs make the Work of Dying hard and difficult.

Thirdly, Death is a Destruction. 150 David calls it, Psal. 90. 3. Thou turnest Man to destruction. That Excellent Frame of Man's Body which David tells us, was tearfully and wonderfully made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the Earth, by God himself, and that with Infinite Power and Wisdom, Psal. 139. 14, 15. Sickneſs will not only stain its Glory and make the Beauty of it to consume like a Moth: But Death will Demolish and pull it down to the ground, turn it into Corruption, and Putrefaction, yea into Dust it self, utterly destroying it so that it shall not be any more, until by the Power of God, it shall be raised up again at the last day. Death now being so destructive a thing unto Man, that nothing will con-

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tent it less than his *Annihilation* in the *Grave*, dying must needs be a *hard* and *difficult* thing unto *Flesh* and *Blood*.

Secondly, Dying is an important difficult Work, if we consider what Death doth: now this I shall explain by opening these two things. First, Death occasions our Spiritual Enemies to assault us. Secondly, It awakens Conscience against us.

First, Death occasions our Spiritual Enemies to assault us most fiercely. Now these Enemies are two, Sin and Satan.

First, Sin. When doth the Guilty Prisoners Crimes come into his Mind, but when he hath a Summons to appear before his Judge? And when doth the Guilt of Sin fly in the Face of a Sinner, but when Death hath him under his Arrest, to carry him before God, the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth? Multitudes of Sins, that before lay hid, and seem'd to be quite forgotten, now shew themselves, and come fresh into a Sinner's mind, as so many Witnesses against him, which upon the Review, he cannot but Remember, though formerly he had forgot them. Oh what a number of horrid wickednesses do now haunt his Thoughts, with dismal apprehensions in the dark night of Death, walking up and down like so many Frightful Ghosts, scaring and terrifying his Soul! Well may an Impenitent Sinner say then unto Death, hast thou found me O mine Enemy? art thou come O Death to call my Sins to Remembrance and to slay my Soul?

Secondly, The Devil will then be very fierce and furious in his Assaults. His Time now is but short, and therefore his Rage is great: This is his
hours

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hour; yea, his *last hour*, and therefore the *Power* of the *Prince of Darknes* is now most put forth; he *knows* he hath but a *few hours* more to *wait*, and if he can but *keep* the *Sinner* so long, he is then his for ever. Assure thy self therefore O *Sinner*, he will be *diligent* in *watching* thy *Sick-bed* both by *night* and by *day*; and if all the *Power* or *Policy* of *Hell* can *prevent* it, neither *Cordial* shall *benefit* thy *Body*, nor *Counsel* and *Advice* *profit* thy *Soul*. The *Devil* is the *great Enemy* of *Souls*, and because he is *miserable himself*, he therefore *labours* that all *others* may be as *miserable* as he is: now the *ways* by which he *expresseth* his *Enmity* against *Souls*, that he may *keep* them from *Eternal Life*, are these: Sometimes by *obstructing* the *Work* of *Grace* in the *Souls* of *Men*; and thus he *works* with all his *might*, by all his *Wiles* and *Devices* that he can to *draw* men unto and *keep* them in a *way* of *Sin*, that they may not set their *Faces* towards *Heaven*, much more that they may not with *earnest endeavours* of *Soul* seek to *obtain* it. It is true, *God* always hath the *Devil* in a *Chain*, and can if he pleaseth, *restrain* and *hinder* him in all his *Malicious Attempts* against his *Children*, and many times he doth *manifest* his *Power* and *Grace* towards his *Servants* in a *dying hour*, by *curbing* in the *Malice* of that *Evil one*, that he shall not be able to *trouble* and *molest* them in their *Passage* into *Heaven*. But yet sometimes *God* doth then *permit* the *Devil* to shew his *Malice* against his *People*; and then how *fiercely* and *furiously* doth he make his *Assaults* upon them? Then it is they *meet* with the *forest Trials*; and because he could not *prevail* upon them formerly as a *Tempter*, now he turns to be their *Accuser*, charging all their *Sins* upon their *Souls*, with all the *bloody aggravations* of them, *upbraiding* them with all their *Profession*, as if they had been but *Hypocrites*.

pocrites in all that they had done. This God sometimes *permits* him to do, that *their* Grace being exercised, the Trial thereof may appear to be more precious than Gold that *perisheth*, being found to the Praise and Glory of God, and the Shame and Reproach of their Adversary the Devil in a most Glorious Conquest over all his Temptations; for through the Grace and Strength of Christ they overcome him in all his Accusations, and notwithstanding all, they go not only quietly, but sometimes Triumphantly into Heaven and Glory.

Secondly, *Death awakens Conscience.* The Practice of a Sinner is to lull Conscience asleep, that he may the more quietly and undisturbedly go on in Sin; but when Death comes, usually the Conscience of a Sinner is awakened, if the Sinner be not past feeling, & given over to a reprobate sence. Conscience hath its Times and Seasons of stirring in the Souls of Men; as sometimes under the Preaching of the Word Conscience begins to stir within a Sinner, and tells him that those Duties that have been laid before him by the Minister, are the Commands of the Great God, and therefore ought to oblige him to Obedience: Here Conscience is an honest Informer. Sometimes when a Sinner is taking the Word of God into his hand and falls a Reading of it, where he meets with some things Commanded by God, which possibly through ignorance or heedlessness he did not take notice of before to be his Duty, Conscience at such a time takes part with the Word of God, and by its Admonitions, helps forward the Convictions of the Word upon the Heart of a Sinner, that so there may be an Obediential Conformity thereunto: Here now Conscience is a Faithful Monitor. At another time, when a Sinner hath, not only through carelessness, but through wilfulness
and

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and *presumption* fallen into the *Commission* of *some great and horrid Sin*; possibly at such a *time* some *Friend* comes to him and deals plainly and freely with him by *reproving* him *sharply* and *severely* for his *Sin*: *Conscience* now joyns in with the *Reproof*, and becomes as true a *Friend* unto the *Sinner* as any he hath, if he will but *hearken* unto him; here now *Conscience* thunders out both the *Threatnings* of the *Law*, and the *Vengeance* of the *Gospel*; telling the *Sinner*, that *they that do such things, are worthy of Death*; nay, that they deserve *Hell*, for *because of these things sake*, says *Conscience*, *cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience*. *Conscience* here now shews it self an *exact and upright Reprover*. But then there is another *Office* that *Conscience* hath, and that is to be an *Accuser*, and this *Office* it commonly makes use of when it is thoroughly awakened upon a *Death-bed*; for when a *Man* comes to lie upon a *Sick-bed*, and sees the *Visions* of *Death* and the *Grave* before him, the *Charges* of *Conscience* at such a *time* upon a *Sinner*, are most *quick* and *smart*: for *Conscience* being just as it were a going to give up its *Accounts* unto the *Great God*, the *Judge* of all *Flesh*, where it will speak *nothing* but the *Truth*, begins now to give the *Sinner* some *Account* of what it *must* and *will* say before the *Tribunal* of *God* then. And this is one *Reason*, why *Conscience* is so *strict* and so *severe* in its *Charge* against the *Soul*, that it will let nothing pass that comes into the *mind* of a *Sinner*, without leaving some *stinging Remembrances* of its former guilt, even such as are more bitter than *Death* it self. This now makes *Dying* to be so *hard* and *difficult* a *Work*. O happy *Souls* are they who at such a *time* have their *hearts sprinkled* from the *Evil* of an *Accusing Conscience* by the *Blood* of *Jesus Christ*, for they only can have

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have *Peace and Comfort* in the *hour of Death*.

This *Work of dying* though it be so *hard and difficult a Work*, yet is it that we must all undergo, for *Death* is continually *hastening towards us*. The *Blessed Apostle St. Paul* thought *Death* always to be *near*, it made such *speed to him*, that he *lookt upon himself* always as a *dying Man*, and therefore he tells us, *That he did die daily*, 1 Cor. 15. 31. and in Rom. 8. 36. *For thy sake*, says he, *we are killed all the day long*, *we are counted as Sheep for the Slaughter*. And if we make *Hezekiah's Reasoning* to be our own, (though he was under a fit of *Sickness* when he said it, but we are in *Health*) yet we shall not be much *mistaken in the Account*, when he tells us, *From day even unto night*, says he, *thou wilt make an end of me*. What though *Death* hath not *laid his cold hands upon us* by some *Mortal Disease*, yet may he not lie in *Ambush* for us, and cut us off suddenly? *Time* hath *Wings* and *flies away swiftly* from us; and truly *Death* doth not *creep*, but with the same *swiftness posts towards us*. *Man is wasting and consuming every day*; his *Body wastes*, his *Strength wastes*, his *Parts waste*, his *Time wastes*; yea, his very *Life wastes*; and *whither tend all these Consumptions and wastings*, but only to the *hastening of Death*? neither will these end till they *terminate in Man's Dissolution*.

But though *Man* in this *Life* is always *hurrying on unto Death*, yet how *few* are there that *consider*, how *suddenly* themselves or others may *die*? we *easily and slightly pass over the Thoughts of Death*, and the *suddenness of its approach*, because it is that we have no *mind to*. We would not yet *die our selves*, and therefore we *will not think we shall*. *Guests* that are *unwellcome to us*, we either *keep them out of our Houses*, or *turn them out as soon*

Ch. III. *Few consider Death will come.* 63

as we can. Such are the *Thoughts* of *Death*, either of our own or others, and therefore if possible we endeavour to keep them out of our minds altogether; but if sometimes they will thrust in upon us, we turn them out again as soon as we can, filling our *Thoughts* with some other things. But alas this will not do always, for the *Thoughts* of *Death* will return again upon some occasions or other. God by some *Providence* may be will awaken *Conscience*, and stir up *Thoughts* of *Death* in our minds, let us do what we can to hinder them; yea, though we do what we can to stifle them; but this is no thanks to us, for of our selves we will not be brought to think of, or regard how suddenly others do and our selves may die, till by some sad *Providence*, we are brought to the Sick bed of some Friend, whom *Death* hath bedewed with cold Sweats, and racked with *Convulsions*, so that he lies gasping and dying before us: till our Eyes be brought thus to Affect our Hearts, our Hearts are seldom Affected as they ought with the Sence of our Mortality.

Now as *Death* comes suddenly upon many, so commonly it comes violently upon wicked Men, their Souls are not surrendered or delivered up unto God, but they are rent and torn from them by Force and Violence. A wicked Man cannot commend his Soul into the Hands of God when he is dying. Indeed we have a form of making the Wills of dying Men, wherein the Person that lies upon his Death-Bed, says, I commend my Soul into the Hands of God which (in the Judgment of Charity) because we have nothing to do to Censure Mens Eternal State) in the General we must not wholly Condemn; yet it is to be feared, that few that say those words, do it heartily and sincerely, and upon such Grounds, as God will accept and receive, when they leave their Bodies. There are some who have
lived

64 *Death violent to Wicked Men.* Chap. III.

lived in *Sin* all their *Days*, yet have *strong* presumptions of the *Mercy* of *God* upon their *Death-beds*. *God* is a *merciful* *God* say they; and therefore with *boldness* and *confidence* they commend their *Souls* unto him, relying upon his *Mercy* for *Salvation*: But such are *strangely* *Ignorant* of the *method* of *God* in *saving* *Sinners*, and by *Custom* in *Sin*, and the *Judgment* of *God* upon them for it, they are become *insensible*, their *Consciences* are *seared* and *asleep*, and so neither their *Sin*, nor the *misery* they are *liable* to for *Sin*, doth in the *least* trouble them. But otherwise the *Death* of a *wicked* *Man* is *violent*, he doth not *resign* up his *Soul* unto *God*, but it is *forced* from him whether he will or no.

But though a *Sinner's* *Death* be *violent*, yet no *Man* *dies* before his *time*, though some in *Scripture* are said so to do: Hence we read that *Caution* of the *Wise* *Man*, *Eccles.* 7. 17. *Be not wicked over much, why shouldst thou die before thy time.* And *God* threatens. *Psal.* 55. 23. *Bloody and deceitful Men shall not live out half their Days.* And it is a *common saying* among us, that such a one is *cut off* in the *midst* of his *Days*.

To all which I shall only return this short *Answer*, That *simply* and in *it self* considered, it is *impossible* but that the *whole* *tale* of *Days*, that *God* hath appointed to every one, must be *fulfilled*, according to the *Number* of them. They are set down by *God*, and no *Man* can *die* before *God's* *time*. It is true a *Man* may *die* before his *time*, that is, before he is *prepared* by *Grace*, or before he is *ripened* in the *course* of *Nature*: Such *expressions* as these denote no more, than *either*, that *God* cuts them off in their *full strength*, and in the *vigour* of their *years*, when yet they might according to *humane* *probability* have lived *much longer*; or *else*, comparing the

shortness

Ch. III. *An exhortation to prepare for Death* 65

shortness of their lives with the length of others, God seems as it were to break it off in the very midst before he hath finished it.

And is *Death* the lot of all Men sooner or later? Though all die not the same way, and after the same manner, nor at the same time; yet is *Death* the end of all Men? Doth *Death* pass upon all because all have sinned? Why then, let every one prepare for *Death*. The Spirit of God tells us, that all flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field, which soon withers and dies. And is it so with these Bodies of ours, that they are frail and dying? The Wisdom of a Christian then should manifest it self; not in labouring to avoid the stroke of *Death*, for that is impossible; nor yet in spending too much time in daubing over a House of Clay; or in repairing and propping up of an Earthly Tabernacle, which when we have done all, will at length crumble into dust; but seeing the Body is appointed for and will turn to dust, to be solicitous that when it dies, it may die happily and comfortably.

Christian, whoever thou art, into whose hands these lines may fall, know that I am come to acquaint thee with a message from the True and Faithful God, that cannot lye, that the Lease of thy Life is almost expired, and that the time of thy departure is not far off: What habitation hast thou provided for thy precious and immortal Soul, that it may not at its departure out of thy Body take up its dwelling with Devils and damned Spirits for ever? It may be thou hast provided well for thy Wife and Children, heap'd up much Silver and Gold together for them, added House to Land, that they may dwell upon the Earth; it may be thou hast settled thy Estate, so as to prevent all disputes and quarrelings when thou art dead: I cannot say but thou hast done well,

66 *Conscience awakened at Death.* Chap. III.

well, and that these things ought to be done, I condemn thee not: But what hast thou done for thy Soul all this while? Hast thou not laid out much more care and pains for thy never dying Soul, than thou hast for thy perishing Body? If not, let me say unto thee, O careless Sinner, as the Mariners said unto Jonah in the Storm, What meanest thou, O Sleeper? What meanest thou O drowsy stupid Sinner? Arise, for God's sake, and for thy Soul's sake, and bestir thy self; look about thee; Whither art thou going? What will become of thee? Is not Eternity before thee? And must not thy State and Condition be for ever hereafter, as thy Preparations are now? O that God would open thine Eyes, that thou mayest see what will make for thine Eternal Interest, before Death open them, when it will be too late.

Now that I may press this *Exhortation* the more home upon thy *Conscience*, I shall lay down two or three *Reasons* for thy more thorough *Conviction*, that it will be much for thy *Interest* and *Advantage* to be ready and *prepared* for *Death*.

First, *Consider, Conscience will then be very busy and active in reviewing thy Life.* Now if for the most part thereof thou hast walked uprightly with God, *Conscience* will then give thee some measure of boldness towards God. But now if at such a time, when *Conscience* is reflecting back upon thy former *Life*, it cannot but say, if it will speak the *Truth* (as usually upon a *Death bed* it doth.) I have been considering thy former ways, and the *Account* that I can give of them in general is, that they abound with multitudes of *Sins* and *Provocations*, which no Man can number; to particularize them would be endless; but if it may tend any way to thy *Repentance*, before it be too late: Remember, O *Sinner*,
(for

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(for I do,) how long God hath lengthened out thy Life, how many tenders of Christ and Salvation by him he hath made unto thy Soul, which thou hast rejected. How many years of Sabbaths hast thou enjoyed? How often hath the Spirit of God moved upon thy Soul, and stirred up holy motions in thy Heart, which thou hast resisted and quenched? What multitudes of Mercies, wherewith God would have drawn thee to himself, hast thou slighted and abused? How many corrections and afflictions hath God laid upon thee, wherewith he would have imbittered Sin unto thy Soul, that himself might have been more sweet, which thou hast despised and grown more hardened in Sin under? How hath the Patience of God been even wearied with waiting upon thee, whilst thou hast pressed him with thy Sins, even as a Cart is pressed with Sheaves, and yet thou wouldst not forbear thy wicked ways? Dost thou not remember the particular times and days, the several seasons and occasions wherein it hath been thus and thus with thee? Surely, says Conscience, thou canst not forget it, these things are all down in my Book, though thou thoughtest I took no notice of them, and I am now a going to open this Book to shew it to thy Judge, where I shall justify them all to thy very face; for I do very well remember every one of them: O that for thy Soul's sake I could say, I do as well remember thy praying, thy bearing, thy reading, thy Meditation of holy and heavenly things, with the sincerity; yea, the fervour and earnestness of thy Soul expressed in all these; that I could bear Witness to thy Faith, to thy Humility, to thy Patience and Self-denial, to thy Repentance and Godly Sorrow for Sin, to the daily longing and breathing of thy Soul after the being rid of a Body of Death, that thou mightest never offend God any more; but I cannot say these things of thee, and I dare not

now

now flatter thee and tell thee, that I *can*, when I *cannot*, and if I should it would do thee no good at all; for the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth, before whom thou and I are now going to appear, knows all *these things* that I have now told thee of to be true, and will *quickly* undeceive thee, whatever thy hopes are now, and make thee *know* these things unto thy everlasting confusion; unless out of the infinite Riches of his Grace and Mercy he give thee Repentance presently, which thou canst have very little hopes of now at Death, since thou didst not turn to him in thy Life.

Secondly, Consider, when thou comest to die, thou wilt then have to do with God himself immediately. It is true, while we are here in the Body we have to do with God, and all our Affairs whatsoever are transacted under his Eye and in his presence; therefore we read in Heb. 4. 13. *That all things are naked and open unto the Eyes of that God with whom we have to do.* There is no Prayer we make, no Sermon we hear, no Holy Duty we perform, no Mercy we enjoy, no Affliction we lie under, nor any Action we do in our whole lives, but we have to do with God in it: But when we come to die, we have to do with God in another way and manner than what we have to do with him in this World; here we have to do with God in Duties and Ordinances; but it is in such a way as is becoming our present state of distance from him; of which I may say, as the Prophet doth in another case, it is neither clear nor dark, insomuch that Faith it self hath much a-do sometimes to discover God unto the Soul; and no wonder then, if a Carnal Eye cannot discern him: But when as the Wise Man speaks, the Soul shall return to God that gave it, the Soul then goes into the immediate Presence of God, having to do with him

him in such an *immediate way* and *manner*, that there is nothing in the *Eye* of the *Soul* to obscure or hinder the sight of the *Divine Presence*; no *vail* of *Flesh* between *God* and *it*, but *naked Majesty* and *Glory* discovers it *self* to the *Soul* with the *rays* of its own *light*, which is so full of *wonder* and *astonishment*, that we know not now how to conceive of it, much less to express it. And if a *holy Prophet*, seeing but a *Vision* of *God*, crys out, *Wo is me, I am undone, for I am a Man of unclean Lips, and mine Eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts, Isai 6.5.* O how much more may it *overwhelm* a *Soul*, when *stripp'd* of its *Body*, to see not only a *Vision* of *God*, but to see *God himself* as it were *face to face*! But this is not all; for the *Soul* is not by *Death* barely brought before the *Great and Glorious God*, but it is brought before him to be judged to an *Eternal State*. In this *Life* we come into the presence of *God* upon a *Treaty of Peace*, between *God* and our *Souls*. *God is now in Christ reconciling Sinners unto himself*, and is willing not to *impute* their *Sins* and *Trespases* unto them; and if they will accept of his *terms* they may make *Peace* with him, for he saith now unto *Sinners*, let them take hold of my strength and so make *Peace* with me, and they shall make *Peace* with me; but if *Sinners* will not throw away the *Weapons* of their *Rebellion* out of their *Hands*, I mean their *Sins* out of their *Hearts*, whereby they fight against *God*; but *Death* comes and strikes them dead with their *Weapons* in their *Hands*, I mean in the *embracements* of their *lusts*; *God* and they must treat after another manner, not upon *terms* of *Peace*, but upon *terms* of *Judgment*; for away they go immediately after *Death* before *God* as a *judge*, the *Spirit* then returning unto *God* that gave it, to receive a *decernative sentence* of *Happiness* or *Misery* for ever. And who would not

70 *A Sinner at Death looseth all.* Chap. III.

not then be *always* prepared for the *stroke* of *Death*, that carries the *Soul* into the *presence* of such a *Judge*, who hath *power* to, and who will *determine* its *everlasting State*?

Thirdly, As a farther *Argument* to persuade *Christians* unto a *preparation* for *Death*, Consider the *misery* of those who when *Death* comes upon them are *unprovided* for it: And this I shall do in these following particulars briefly.

First, *An unprepared Sinner at Death looseth all his outward comforts and enjoyments.* In this *Life* it may be *Providence* did abound towards him with *variety* of outward enjoyments, as *Riches*, *Relations*, *Pleasures*, *Profits*, and the like; but *Death* is now come and hath *swept* away all of these things that were *desirable*. It was a *doleful expression* of *Abraham* unto the *Rich Man* in *Hell*, *Luke* 16. 25. *Son remember thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.* Oh what a *cutting word* was this to his *Soul*, when he was *passed* into another *World*? And will it not wound thy *Soul* as deeply, O *Sinner*, who hast not made thy *Preparations* for *Eternity*, when thou comest to pass through the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, to consider thou hast received all thy *good things* already? yea, and having received them, if thou couldst *always* live with them, and keep them *always* with thee, it might be something to thee; but alas thou canst not; for when *Death* comes it will turn thee out of all thy *possessions* and *enjoyments*; when thou dielt thou shalt *take nothing* in thy hand with thee of all thy labour, as the *Wise Man* speaks, *Eccl.* 5. 15. The things of this *World* will not go one *step* with thee beyond this *present Life*; and think, O *Sinner*, if thou canst, what a *doleful* thing will it be for a *poor Soul* to be set down.

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down naked upon the vast Ocean of Eternity, having nothing to relieve and support it self with, all its Riches and Treasures being left behind it in another World.

Secondly, *The Misery of an unprepared Sinner for Death* appears in this, that then he shall be deprived of all the Seasons and Opportunities of Grace. It is no mean Mercy to thee, O Sinner, hadst thou a Heart to improve it, that thou now enjoyest the Ordinances of Life and Salvation, that thou hast the tenders of Mercy, the entreaties of Ministers, the motions of the Spirit, invitations to come unto Christ, leave and liberty to cast down thy self at the Feet of God, and by Prayer and Supplication seek his Face, and be as earnest and fervent as thou wilt or canst be for Mercy: But let me tell thee at Death the door of Mercy will be for ever shut, there will be no Praying, or Preaching, or Hearing in the Place whither thou art going; no declaring this loving kindness of God in the Grave, nor this faithfulness of his in Destruction. Now the Ordinances of God, though precious to others, yet are they tedious and irksome unto thee; the Church of God to thee is little better than a Prison, the Sabbath-day is the longest day in the Week in thy Account, thou wouldst fain be rid of it; the Commands of Christ, which to a Gracious Soul are sweet and delightful, are no better than Bonds and Fetters unto thee, which thou wouldst fain break asunder and cast away from thee; the Language of thy Carnal Heart is this; (though the Sermon be commonly measured by the space of an hour;) yet thou cryest, when will the Glass be out, when will the Duty be done, when will the Sabbath be over, that we may follow the world again; thou thinkest Prayer too long, and Sermons too long, and Sabbaths too long: Well, be patient,

72 *The Misery unprepared Sinners, &c. Ch. III.*

patient, O Sinner, for a while, and in a short time thou shalt never be troubled with these long painful *Duties* any more; *Death* will ease thee of all these *Burthens*; that *Night* is coming upon thee, wherein there shall be no more of *these Works* done for ever; and then though with *Esau*, thou shouldst carefully seek a place of *Repentance*, with *Tears*, to bewail thy former *Folly*, yet thou shouldst not find it.

Thirdly, *The Misery of an unprepared Sinner for Death* lies in this, that he then loseth all his hopes and expectations. Hope, it is the Anchor and Support of the Soul in time of Trouble; sometimes the Soul is brought to such straits, and under such sore pressures, that it hath nothing to live upon but Faith and Hope; Faith believes there shall be a happy issue out of those troubles the Soul is under, and therefore Hope encourageth the Soul to wait patiently till a time of Deliverance doth come; it will come, saith Faith, for God is Faithful who hath promised; I will wait therefore, saith Hope, and my expectations shall not be in vain, for they that wait upon him shall not be ashamed: But now all the Hopes of a Sinner will fail and disappoint him at Death; for indeed he had no true well-grounded Hope. We read in Scripture of a true and lively Hope, 1 Pet. i: 3. but this is found only in the Saints, Blessed be God (saith the Apostle) who hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead: But a Sinner's Hope is not a lively but a dead Hope; and what can the Fruits of such a Hope be but shame and disappointment? When a Wicked Man dies, says the Wise Man, his Expectations shall perish, Prov. xi. 7. And what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, says Job, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul, Job 27. 8. why nothing but shame and dis-

Ch. III. *The loss of a Sinner at Death.* 73

disappointment. And if Hope deferred, maketh the Heart sick, as Solomon tells us, then Hope frustrated, especially a Hope of Heaven and Happiness, must needs kill, even as with a thousand Deaths.

Fourthly, *An unprepared Sinner at Death loseth his Soul; and this is such a Jewel that its worth and value is not known on Earth, but shall be fully known in Hell.* Were it possible for thee, O Sinner, to understand what is included in the loss of thy Soul, it would be as a Dagger at thy Heart; the thoughts of it would make thee mingle thy drink with weeping, and embitter all the Comforts of thy whole life unto thee. In *Matt. 16. 26.* *What is a Man profited if he gains the whole World, and lose his own Soul, or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* Behold here, O Sinner, of what an incomparable worth and value thy Soul is, and what an irreparable loss it is if thou lovest it; this is such a loss, as there is none like it, for the gain of the whole World cannot balance the loss of one Soul. It is also an irrecoverable loss: God hath given thee two Eyes, two Hands, and two Feet, and if thou lovest one Eye thou hast another, or if thou lovest one Limb, thou hast more; but God hath given thee but one Soul, and if thou lovest that, thou hast no more. If thou lovest thy Estate, by thy diligence and the Blessing of God upon thy endeavours, thou mayest recover it again: yea, if thou lovest thy Life, thou mayest be a gainer by it, for thou mayest find it again, for he that loseth his Life for my sake, says Christ, shall find it. How so, shall he live again here on Earth? no, but he shall find it with infinite gain and advantage in Heaven; for instead of a Temporal Life, he shall gain an Eternal Life. But if thy Soul, O Sinner, be once lost, thou art undone for ever; this is such a loss, that the thoughts thereof

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72 *The Misery unprepared Sinners, &c. Chap.*

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may make thy *Hair* stand on end upon thy *Head*; yea, it is that which when ever thou *readest* or *thinkest* of, may make thy *Heart* to ake; do not thy *Ears* tingle, and thy *Loyns* tremble to hear of it?

Having thus laid down some *quickning* Considerations to stir up *Christians* to prepare for *Death*. I shall in the next place endeavour to propound such *Directions* as may, by the *Blessing* of *God*, be helpful to them in their *Preparations* for their latter end.

Now the *General Direction* for a *Christian's* Preparation for *Death* is to get an *Interest* in *Christ* by a *Work* of *Conversion*, changing the *State* and *Condition* of the *Soul*. This now is the *main Work* of a *Christian*, without which he is no real *Christian*. *Profession* of *Christianity* gives a *Man* the *Name* of a *Christian*, but it is only *Implantation* into *Christ* by believing, that gives a *Man* the being of a *Christian*. It is *Essential* to a *Christian* as a *Christian*, that he be in *Christ*. By *Nature* all *Men* are *Strangers*; yea, *Enemies* to *God* and *Christ*; and therefore it is necessary, that there be a *Manifestation* of the *Power* of *Converting* *Grace* to change our *Hearts*, and *Sanctifie* our *Natures*, and till this be done, we are but *Nominally Christians*; we have only a *Name* to live, but we are *dead*. He that is not in *Christ*, is not a *Christian* in *Deed* and in *Truth*. Now this being in *Christ*, which is always accompanied with *Conversion* and *Sanctification*, is that which makes *Life* comfortable, *Death* easy, and *Heaven* sure and certain. He that hath an *Interest* in *Christ*, may live joyfully in any *Condition*, if he knows but his own *Happiness*, he need not be troubled, let what will befall him; whether he hath more or less, he hath it with the *Love* of *God*; all his *Mercies* come twining to him in the *Blood* of *Jesus*, and therefore he may well sit down and be

content;

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content ; yea, be thankful and rejoyce, knowing that all things shall work together for his *Eternal Benefit and Advantage* ; there being no *Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*. And as for *Death* how easy a thing is it to such a Soul ? I confess *Death* is very terrible to one that is out of *Christ*, but to one that is in *Christ*, *Death* is his *Friend* ; yea, his *best Friend* next to *Christ* ; what says the Apostle of such, *1 Cor. 3. 21. All things are yours, that is for your Benefit and Advantage, whether Paul or Apollo's, or Cephas, or things present, or things to come, or Life, or Death, all is yours*. But how comes all this about ? why because you are *Christ's*, and *Christ* is *God's*. *Death* therefore cannot hurt such. The *Happiness* of those that are in *Christ*, lies in the *Manifestation* of the *Divine Love and Favour* unto their *Souls* ; now this *Death* cannot hinder them of. I know many of *God's People*, have not the *Light* of his *Countenance* lifted up upon their *Souls* in *Death*, but their passage to *Heaven* is dark and uncomfortable ; *God* loves them, though they know it not ; yet by this darkness and uncomfortableness which *Death* brings upon them by their passage through it, *Death* is but bringing them to the most clear Discoveries of the *Love of God* to their *Souls* in *Heaven*, with which they shall then be filled and satisfied to all *Eternity*. Our *Comfort* in *Death* lies in the *Knowledge* of our *Interest* in *Christ*, but so doth not our *Happiness*, that lies in our *Interest* in *Christ*, whether we know it or not. Our *Consolation* in a dying hour springs from our *Assurance* that *Christ* is ours, and we are his, but our *safety* and *security* in that hour, ariseth from the *certainty* of our *Interest* in *Christ*. Indeed our *Ignorance* that we are in *Christ* when we come to die, may prejudice our present *Peace and Comfort in Death* ; but it shall not pre-

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judice our future Happiness after Death. They that are in Christ are always in a safe Condition; they may die uncomfortably indeed, but they cannot die miserably; they are built upon the Rock of Ages; and therefore though they fall by Death into the Grave even as others, yet they perish not with others. Death may kill them, but it cannot hurt them. He that hath an Interest in Christ, being united to him by Faith, need not fear what Death can do unto him. True and thorough Conversion from Sin unto God, is a sure Foundation for Peace and Safety both in Life and Death. He that is interested in Christ is built upon a Rock that is Impregnable, the Gates of Death and Hell shall not prevail against him. To behold a Man dying that is in Christ, this is Comfortable; for such a one dies that he may live for ever, and changes only a Temporal for an Eternal Life. To behold a Christless Person, but not in a dying condition, this is something tolerable, for who can tell but that the next Sabbath, or the next Sermon, God may make it a time of Love to his Soul, even such a day of his Power and Grace towards him, as thereby savingly to draw him unto Christ. But to behold a dying Man, and a Christless Man also, this is dreadful; yea, even intolerable, for such a one dies from Earth to be Damned in Hell. It was a sad and doleful Complaint (and Oh that it might startle and awaken some secure Sinner to look after Christ) that was once uttered by one upon a Death-Bed, being just a dying, Oh I want nothing now but a Christ to Save me. O miserable State and Condition indeed, for in having him, the Soul hath all that can do it good, or make it good; but in wanting of him, the Soul hath nothing that can do it good here, or make it happy hereafter. Interest in Christ is the only true Preparation for Death. This now

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is the general Direction for our Preparation for Death, without which there is no dying happily or comfortably. But the more particular Directions are these that follow.

First, *Wouldst thou be prepared for Death, then die unto Sin, by daily and constant endeavours to mortifie and subdue the Power and Strength of it in the Exercise of a Holy Life.* The Apostle tells us in Rom. 6. 23. *That the wages of Sin is Death.* By which he means Temporal and Eternal Death: This now is the Fruit of Sin, for Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin, and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death. But is there no way to escape this Death? yes, from Spiritual and Eternal Death, there is a deliverance, and therefore the Apostle tells us, in Rom. 6. 13. *That if we through the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the Body, that is the deeds of the Body of Sin, then we shall live and not die; that is we shall live Spiritually, and not die Eternally; and as for a Temporal Death, though we cannot scape the stroke of it, yet we shall be free from the Curse and Sting of it.* Wouldst thou therefore, O Christian, be prepared for Death when it comes, then take from it now its Power and Strength. When the Philistines saw Sampson was too strong for them, they labour to know wherein his great Strength lay, and when they found it was in the Hair of his Head, they would not be quiet till they got his Hair cut off. Every Christian hath to deal with a dreadful Enemy unto Nature, and that is Death. Assault he will all of us at one time or other; yea, and be too hard for us. If now we would overcome him, we must find out where his great Strength lies; the Spirit of God now tells us, that the Power and Sting of Death is Sin, so we read in 1 Cor. 15. 56. *The Sting*

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of Death is Sin. And the Power and Sting of every Mans particular Death lies in his own Sins. Death cannot hurt any of us but by that Power and Strength that our sins put into its hands. Christian, the way how thou mayest overcome thine Enemy Death, is set open to thee, his Strength is discovered to thee, that thou mayest have thine Advantage against him, to weaken him, and to take away his Strength, and that is by dying unto Sin, this will be the Death of Death. Yield not therefore at any time to its Solicitations, for this is but to make Death the more strong and Powerful to wound thy Soul and Conscience. When therefore thou art tempted unto any Sin, though it may seem pleasant and delightful, yet before thou yieldst unto the Temptation, say to thy self, O my Soul, how will this relish with me when I come to lie upon a Death-bed, and my Soul sits trembling upon my Lips ready to take its Flight unto the Tribunal of God? What Peace and Comfort will it procure to my Conscience then? Will not the Remembrance of it prove more bitter than Gall and Wormwood, and the grating Reflections of Conscience more stinging and tormenting to the Soul, than a thousand Deaths could possibly be? Wouldst thou not have Death bitter then, let not Sin be sweet now. Part with Sin betimes, get that removed that is the troubler of a Death-Bed, and the Sting of Death; and that is Sin. Make it your daily business to be dying unto Sin. Now this dying unto Sin implies our constant endeavours to subdue the Power and Strength of Sin, and this is done by daily Mortification. It is true in the People of God Sin doth not Reign, and that is Comfortable to consider. Sin in the work of Conversion hath received such a Wound as is incurable; but yet wherever Sin is in any Soul, it doth not use to lie dormant; but where it cannot Reign, it will molest and

and struggle; yea, and it may be, prevail to a Victory sometimes, even over those, over whom it shall never prevail unto Condemnation. This now calls for a constant work of Mortification. Every day there are corrupt Inclinations and Propensions to be kept in, sinful thoughts to be contended with, Evil motions to be supprett; and it is not the meer Habit and Principle of Grace received in our first Conversion, without the vigorous and constant Exercise of it in a way of Mortification, that will overcome all these. Though Regeneration hath given Sin its Deaths wound, yet Mortification must daily weaken and subdue its Power and Strength; and according as the work of Mortification is successful in the Soul, so will be our Peace and Purity in Life, and our Joy and Comfort in Death.

Secondly, Keep Conscience clear, that it may not have the guilt of any known sin to charge you withal. Now Conscience may then be said to be clear, when it is pure, and when it is a Peaceable Conscience that is peaceable must be pure, and a pure Conscience, usually is a peaceable Conscience. When Conscience is free from all known and willful defilements, and not justly burthened with the guilt of Sin, then is Conscience clear. If it be possible do not wound Conscience, and if you would not, have a care of Sin: he that is not watchful to avoid Sin, cannot have a clear Conscience. It is impossible for us, while we are surrounded about with Infirmities, and oppressed with a Body of Sin and Death (which the Apostle complains of) to keep our selves free and unspotted from all Sin, for in many things we offend all. Those Sins now that are Sins of weakness and Infirmary, as they are usually small Sins, and so hardly discernable many times by our selves nor others; so they do not break our Peace with God, nor obscure the clearness of our Consciences; but they

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are known and wilful sins that waste and wound the Conscience, and they that are not careful to keep themselves from sinning thus, can never have a clear Conscience, nor be in a prepared State for Death; for how can Conscience speak Peace unto the Soul upon a Death-bed with the guilt of any known sin upon it? If you wound Conscience by sin now, Conscience will wound you for sin hereafter. Any known sin committed against Conscience, will exceedingly discompose and trouble the Soul in a dying hour. Reader, doth thy Conscience reprove thee for living in any sinful way, or for being careless and remiss in looking after Heaven and Eternity? hearken unto Conscience now, that Conscience may hearken unto you another day. O Sinner, when thou shalt come to lie upon a Death-bed, and begin to examine thy Conscience how things are with thee, and how it is like to go with thee for ever; thou wouldest then be glad to have Conscience give thee a comfortable answer, and say all is well, and all shall be well with thee to Eternity; thou hast been Faithful in following my Counsels and Reproofs, that from the Great God according to his Word I delivered unto thee, and now I will be as Faithful in declaring to thee, the Truth of things as to thy future State, fear not therefore, for it shall certainly go well with thee for ever. Wouldst thou now have Conscience speak thus comfortably to thee at Death? hearken to what Conscience saith to thee now; for if thou dost not hearken unto Conscience in thy life time, when it Faithfully Admonisheth and Reproves thee; Conscience will not hearken unto thee at thy Death, to excuse and acquit thee, but will prove thy great Accuser and Condemner. Guilt lying upon the Conscience, makes the Soul ashamed and afraid to come before God even in this Life, much more at Death. A Guilty Sinner
cheeseth

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chooseth rather to run away from God, that if it were possible God might not find him. Thus we imitate our Grand-Father Adam, who as soon as he had sinned, endeavours to hide himself from God among the Trees of the Garden. And who of us is there but may observe the same by himself; what slavish fear, what dejection and sinking in our Spirits doth seize upon us when we come before God in the Performance of a Duty after we have provoked him by some known sin? with what Doubtings, with what Fears and misgiving of heart do we come into his Presence, as if we were not willing that God should take any notice that we are before him; and if we are not in continual pain while we are performing the Duty, yet we would willingly enough that the Duty were done and over. And if we cannot tell how to engage in Duty with a guilty Conscience; how shall we be able to contend with Death with a guilty Conscience? If the Presence of God in Duty be so dreadful and terrible unto the Soul under the Apprehension of some known sin committed by it and not pardoned to it, that it makes it quake and tremble to come before him, what then will the Presence of God in Death and Judgment, when Conscience shall be awakened to make terrible Reflections, not upon a particular sin, but upon the sins of a whole Life, if not Repented of? Oh with what horreur and amazement, with what Consternation and Confusion must such a Soul be filled withal? But now he whose Conscience is clear, Oh how doth he Rejoyce to draw nigh to God, how glad is he to go up unto the House of the Lord, as David speaks, with what delight doth his Soul harken unto God in Duty, that it may taste how good the Lord is, that it may see the Power and Glory of God, so as it hath sometimes done in his Sanctuary; O with what Peace and Contentment of Mind, shall I say? alas

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these are Expressions of too low and too mean a Signification, to represent the workings of such a Soul towards God; rather with what Joy and Rejoycing, with what Triumph and Exultation, doth such a Soul make its abode and stay with God in Duty, where it enjoys the sweet and refreshing Smiles of his Countenance, and sits under the delightful Banner of his Love. Thus it is with a Christian in Duty, that hath a clear Conscience. And if it be thus with him in Duty, and Conscience continue to keep its clearness and inoffensiveness in an upright walking with God daily; it cannot be bad or ill with such a Soul at Death. A Conscience kept clean and pure in Life, will be quiet and peaceable in Death; nay, let me say more, he who hath made it his care and business to walk continually with a clear and inoffensive Conscience in his Life, shall certainly have much boldness; yea, and usually a great deal of Joy and Rejoycing in Death; and though the Devil may and will labour to disturb such a Soul's Peace and Comfort then; yet a Conscience sprinkled with the Blood of Christ, shall be too hard for him. And what Conscience doth in God's Name on good grounds upon a Death-bed, God will confirm and enlarge to the Soul's everlasting Comfort and Consolation, when Death shall bring it to appear before him.

Thirdly, Would you be prepared for Death, get Sin pardoned, and labour much after the Assurance of it. Sin is the cause of death, the means by which Death came into the World; had there been no sinning, there would have been no dying: but sin coming into the World, death came along with it. Rom. 5. 12. As by one Man sin entred into the World, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned. By sinning against God, Man is come under a necessity of dying.

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The wages of sin, says the Apostle, is Death; nay sin is that which gives Death its sting; so we read 1 Cor. 15. and 56. The sting of Death is sin. This is it which gives Death its power, and makes it so dreadful; and because of Guilt lying on the Soul, makes it unfit to die. But now where the Soul is sprinkled with the Blood of Christ, the Guilt of Sin taken away by an Act of Pardon and Forgiveness, that Soul is prepared to receive and entertain Death whensoever it comes; and though it make not that Death shall not be, yet it makes that Death shall not hurt, for Sin is pardoned. Sin is that which makes the Soul cry out bitterly under the Apprehensions of Death, and of the Wrath of God. Oh, that I had never committed such and such Sins! Why know, O pardoned Sinner, thou hast thy wish; for God when he pardons Sin, makes it to be as if it had never been committed. Things forgotten are no more to us than as if they had never been. Why now says God, I will forgive their Iniquities, and I will remember their Sins no more. And doth God, O fearful Soul, make thy Sins to be as if they had never been by his pardoning Grace and Mercy; and shall not thy former fears of Sin, and of Death by Reason of Sin, be now as if they had never been. Thou need'st not fear, O trembling Soul, that thou shalt ever be questioned again for those Sins that God hath once forgiven thee. God's Acts of Oblivion can never be repealed; for the Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance. Guilt binds a Sinner over unto Punishment, no wonder then that an unpardoned Sinner who is unfit to die, is afraid of Death; for whenever Death comes to such a Soul, it comes with a deadly incurable Sting. Death to an unpardoned Sinner, is Death with a witness; for it is Death and Hell in to the Bargain. But now to a pardoned Sinner, let Death come
when

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when and how it will, he is prepared for it, his Condition is safe, he cannot be miserable; Death may kill him, but it cannot hurt him; and therefore what need he fear it. Now if you would know the Safety and Happiness of your Condition, labour for an Assurance that your Sins are pardoned. Your future Happiness depends upon the pardon of Sin, but your present Comfort depends upon your Assurance that Sin is pardoned. He whose Sins are pardoned dies safely, but he who knows his Sins are pardoned dies comfortably. Pardon of Sin frees from Condemnation, but it is Assurance of Pardon that brings Peace and Comfort. That Man is not so ready to die, nor in such a prepared Frame of Soul for Death as he ought to be in; who, though his Sins are pardoned, and thereby he hath a Right and Title unto Heaven, yet walks in the dark, and is at Uncertainties whether his Sins are pardoned or not; for as our pardon of Sin is necessary to our dying happily, so the Assurance of our Pardon is necessary to our dying comfortably. Take a Man that is at a loss and under Doubts and Fears that his Sins are not pardoned, if Death should come to him while he is under those Doubts and Fears, with what difficulty would he make a shift to die? How hardly would he be brought to it? What Pretences and Excuses would he make? Alas, says he, I know not where I am, nor what Death will do with me; and though I am so sick that I cannot live, yet I am so afraid I dare not die; for I know not whither I am going, nor where my Dwelling shall be for ever, whether in Heaven or in Hell. O what shall I do therefore. But now he whose Sins are not only pardoned, but he walks daily under the comfortable Assurance thereof, it being sealed and witnessed to him by the Spirit of God, which Spirit as the Apostle saith, witnesseth with our Spirits that we are the

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the Children of God: If Death comes to him he rejoiceth; for, saith he, *I know that if my earthly House of this Tabernacle be dissolved, I have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* The Sum of all is this; Pardon of Sin is very good, for it is our Safety; for they that are pardoned shall certainly be saved: but to have Sin not only pardoned, but to have the Assurance that it is pardoned, this is much better. For God to love us so as to pardon and accept us, is the ground of our Hopes for Heaven hereafter: But to have God manifest his Love, and to assure us that he loves us, is our Heaven on this side Heaven. And the more we have of this Assurance, the more joyfully and comfortably shall we be able to pass through a dying Hour.

Fourthly, Would you be prepared for Death, labour for Hearts and Affections crucified to the World, and all things here below. It is impossible we should ever be willing to leave the World, when God calls us hence, till we have first learned to use the World as if we used it not, 1 Cor. 7. and 31. For if our Affections are set upon worldly Things, and our hearts engaged in an eager prosecution of them, it will be as Death to us before we die to think of parting with them; and much more unwilling shall we be to take our everlasting Farewel of them, when Death comes to us, in good earnest: This is commonly the Temper, or rather the Distemper of most Men, the Delights and Accommodations that God affords them for their more comfortable passage through this World, and to encourage them with greater Chearfulness to serve him; have got such an Interest in their Hearts and Affections, that they prize and value them above measure. The Love of the World, and the things of the World is grown so prevalent with many, that

if

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if they might have their *Desires*, they would not care for, nor trouble themselves with any other *Heaven*, but would be content to live here *always*; saying, Let us build *Tabernacles*; nay, let us have a continuing *City* here: But, O Lord forgive them, for they know not what they say: They never experimentally tasted the *Excellency* and *Sweetness* of *Heaven*, and heavenly *Things*, and that is the *Reason* they are so in love with *Earth* and earthly *Things*. Now what wonder is it, that those who place their *Happiness* in the *Things* of this *World*, should be unwilling to die; that the *Thoughts* of *Death* which parts them and their *Happiness*, should be bitter and unpleasant? This now is naturally the *Temper* of all *Men*, till God opens their *Eyes*, and discovers to them more excellent *Things*, even *Things* of a *spiritual* and *divine Nature*, which as they are more suitable to their *Souls*, so are they more durable and satisfying; and having once tasted what present *Sweetness*, *Peace* and *Joy* there is in God, and in ways of *Holiness*, besides what is laid up for them hereafter in *Heaven*; their *Hearts* and *Affections* are now become dead to the *World*, and all worldly *Things*, so that they have no relish and savour of these *Things* upon their *Spirits*: But as St. Paul saith of himself, so it may be said of them; they are now crucified unto the *World*, and the *World* is crucified unto them: The *World* sees no *Glory*, or *Beauty* in them, and they see as little in the *World*. How easily now can such take their leaves of it, when God by *Death* calls them to it. The *Apostle* tells us, for his part he did die daily, 1 Cor. 15. and 31. And did we die daily in our *Desires* and *Affections* unto the *World*, and the *Things* thereof, it would not be so hard for us to die when we come to it in good earnest. When *Death* comes to a Man whose natural strength

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and vigour hath been *wasting* and *consuming* a long time by *lingring Sicknesſes* and *Distempers*, his *Death* is not ſo *hard* and *ſtrong*, as that *Man's Death* is, whom a few day's *Sickneſs* cuts off in the miſt of his *ſtrength* and *Vigour*, *Nature* being *ſtrong* in him to *make reſiſtance* againſt it, whereas in the other the *ſtrength* of *Nature* is *wasted* and *conſumed*, and ſo *Death* to him is more *eaſie*. So is it here, the *Chriſtian* whoſe *Love* and *Affection* to the *World*, and the *Contentments* of this *preſent Life*, hath for many years been *conſuming* and *dying*, will more *freely* and *readily* part with them at *Death*, than he whoſe *Love* and *Affections* are *ſtrongly* and *eagerly bent* upon them; ſuch a one muſt be *rent* and *torn* from them by *force* and *violence* in the *hour* of *Death*. When our *heart's* ſet looſe from all things that are *deſirable* under the *Sun*, and there is nothing upon *Earth* that *inſnares* and *intangles* our *Affections* towards it, one *Difficuly*; yea, and a *great one* too, in our way of *dying* is then *removed*. *Death* will *rend* and *tear* that *heart* that is *glued* in *love* to any thing in this *World*.

Therefore, O *Chriſtian*, as to all thy *worldly Enjoyments*, poſſeſs them as if thou poſſeſſed'ſt them *not*, rejoice in them as if thou rejoiced'ſt *not*, and *uſe* the *World* as *not abuſing* of it; for the *Faſhion* of the *world paſſeth away*. How dreadful will *Death* be to one, who as the *Apoſtle ſaith*, *minds earthly Things*? and how *eaſie* will *Death* be to one, whoſe *Mind* and *Converſation* is in *Heaven*?

It is good therefore for us to *conſider*, that we are but *Strangers* and *Pilgrims* here. *Heaven* is the *proper Place* and *Dwelling* for *holy Souls*. Make *proviſion* therefore by a *holy weanedneſs* of *Heart* and *Affections* for your *departure hence*; ſend your *beſt things* to *Heaven* before-hand, that is your *Heart*, your *Love*, your *Deſight*, and then you

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you your selves will the more *readily* and *willingly* follow after them.

Fifthly, *Would you be prepared for Death, live every day then as if it were your last, doing nothing therein, but what you would be willing to be found doing at Death and Judgment.* He that shall every day seriously consider with himself, for ought I know this may be my last day: The shadows of Death may stretch themselves over my Life, before the shadows of the Evening overtake me. I have no Assurance of my Life here, no not for a moment. How is it therefore with thee, O my Soul as to Eternity, what is thy daily Work and Employment? Is it that wherein if I should meet with Death at the end of it, I can comfortably give an Account thereof unto the Great God? If I knew this to be my last Day, would I be thus employed as I now am? If not, why do I venture upon the doing of that, which I would be loath Death should find me a doing; since I know not but Death may overtake me, before I have finished what I am about. Reader, whoever thou art, possibly thou mayest be guilty of no very great mistake, if thou shouldst think with thy self, as healthful and as strong as now I am, yet there may be some secret, invisible Hand of Death stretched out towards me, possibly this very day I may feel some Symptoms and some Fore-runners of it, some mortal, incurable Disease may seize upon me before Night, and cast me upon a sick Bed, which to me may prove a Death bed. Supposing now that this were thy very Case, and that thou hadst received the Sentence of Death, though not as Hezekiah did, by a Messenger sent immediately by God unto him, as he had, but by the Violence of some Distemper, accompanied with those Signs and Tokens that usually are and have been presages of Death unto others; How then wouldst thou spend

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spend those few small Moments of Time, that thou hast yet left thee on this side Eternity? How would thy Thoughts work? What would thy Words and Discourses then be? Surely thou wouldst not be so abominable stupid and secure, so wretchedly careless and negligent of thy Soul, and of thy eternal Interest and Concerns, when thy Soul is as it were sitting upon thy Lips, and looking over into Eternity, being ready to take its sudden flight thither; as to be plodding and contriving in thy Thoughts how to enjoy the Pleasures, Profits and Delights of the World, which you now find to be nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; nor yet would you be so desperately mad and bold, as to send them for your vain and wicked Companions, with whom you have consumed so many Days and Years in Sin and Wickedness, that you and they might now laugh and waste away your last Hours together also. No, certainly there is no relish and savour now in any of these Things, unless it be that which is bitter; yea surely the Remembrance thereof will then be more bitter to the Soul than Gall and Wormwood. Oh now the Consideration of the Wants and Exigences of the Soul begin to thrust and force themselves into the Mind and Thoughts of a Sinner! O the sight of a righteous and a severe Judge, of a strict Account, and of a dreadful Tribunal! Oh the bitter Upbraidings and Terrors of an accusing Conscience, the fearful Reflections upon past Sins, and the Expectations of future Torments, the Fears and Thoughts of these Things do now fill the Mind and perplex the Soul, and make a Sinner cry out, O what shall I now do to be saved? Were you never in all your Lives by the Death-bed of a careless, negligent Sinner, whose Conscience was then awakened under Horrors and Desperation? If you have not, others have; and what hath been their

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their *dying words*? Oh, that God would *pardon* their *sins*; that he would *Sanctifie* and *Save* their *Souls*; that he would *spare* them a *little space*; that he would *grant* them a *little time* longer, that they might *recover* their *Strength*, that they might *Repent* of their *Sins*, and *Reform* their *Lives*, or else that he would *graciously manifest* his *Love* and *Favour* to their *Souls*, and *receive* them to his *Mercy*. This is the *Language*, these are the *Thoughts* and *Cares* of Men upon a *Sick bed*, when they see *death* coming *near* them, and *staring* them in their *Faces*. And if this were thy *Case* and *Condition*, O *Sinner*, that thou didst now *lie tumbling* and *tossing* upon a *Sick-bed*, yea upon a *Death-bed*; would not *these things* be in thy *mind*? would not the same *Thoughts* and *Cares* possess thy *Soul*, and the same *words* and *discourses* fall from thy *Mouth*? why let the same *Care*, the same *Thoughts*, the same *words*, take up some *part* of *every day* and *hour* of this *Life* now; for thou *knowest* not, but that this *moment* thou art as *near death*, as if thy *Friends* and *Relations*, yea and thy *Physicians* also *despaired* of thy *life*, and had *given thee over* for *dead*. O if we could thus *spend every day*, as if it were our *last*, we should then *hardly be* brought to the doing of any *thing*, but what we would be *willing death* should find us *doing*; and how *exceedingly* would this further our *Preparations* for a *dying hour*.

Sixthly, *He that would be in a readiness for a dying hour*, must frequently *meditate* of his own *death* and of the *death* of *Christ*. To *Meditate* of our own *death*, will make us *Studious* to prepare for it; and to *Meditate* of the *death* of *Christ*, will *Arm* us against the *Fears* of our own *Deaths*. He that by frequent *Meditations* of his own *death*, and of the *death* of *Christ*, hath made *death* familiar

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miliar to his *Soul*, is not only prepared for death, but in a great measure also freed from the fears of death. As to the considering of our own death, the *Scripture* is often in calling upon us to lay the thoughts of it to our hearts. *Oh that my People were wise,* says God, *that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.* And though a Man lives many years and rejoices in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. *Eccle. 11. 8.* By days of darkness we are to understand death, or the State of death during the abode of our Bodies in the dark Grave, or in the darkness of the Grave. He that frequently ponders of his ways, will at length be brought to turn his feet unto God's Testimonies, as David speaks of himself. So he that often thinks upon death, will by the serious thoughts of it be stirred up to make some timely preparation for it, this being the end to which the Contemplations of death doth tend. This is that *Wisdom* which Solomon tells us, the *Living* gain by going often to the House of Mourning, even so to lay to heart the thoughts of death, so as to make preparation for it. It is sad, that the Goodness and Mercy of God should occasion our forgetfulness of him and of our selves, and yet it is commonly so with us. When God lays his Afflicting hand upon us, especially under some smart stroke; we are then brought to seek God, as the Prophet speaks, *In their Affliction they will seek me early.* There is some tendency in Afflictions to make us mindful of God, and of our own Interest and Concerns, which is the design God aims at in Afflicting us. But when God is pleased to open his hand towards us, as the Psalmist speaks, and fill us with his Blessings, then we are very prone to forget both him and our selves; we forget God, because when we are full, we are ready to deny God, and say who

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is the Lord? and we forget our selves, because we return not that Duty and Obedience which such Goodness and Mercy should engage us to. And because the Streams of Mercy now run pleasantly about us, we consider not how many the days of darkness are that will overtake us shortly, but put far from us the thoughts of death and the Grave; and this is the Reason, why when death comes it finds us so unready and unprepared, and we so troubled and discomposed in our Spirits, and under so many fears and doubts as to our Spiritual and Eternal concerns. Frequently therefore, O Christian, make thy private Retirements, Commune with thy self alone, visit Death and the Grave in thy thoughts; take a walk now and then in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, suffer not thy thoughts to be estranged from such Meditations: If thou findest thy self shy and unwilling to engage in such a work, yet bring thy heart to it, inure thy self to the thoughts of Death in general, and of thine own death in particular. And that thou mayest not be afraid of it, to the Meditation of thine own death, joyn the Consideration of the death of Christ, who hath Conquered death, took away its Sting. By dying he slew death, was the death of death, as it was Propheesied of him, in Hosea 13. 14. O Death I will be thy Plagues, O Grave I will be thy Victory. He now that by Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is interested in his death, may say, when ever the time of his departure comes, thanks be to God through Christ, I am ready and prepared for it. Muse therefore much upon the Death of Christ, for herein lies thy support and comfort, O Soul, against thine own Death.

Seventhly, He that would be prepared for death must labour for an assurance of a better life, always living by Faith in the Contemplation of the Glory
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and Happiness of Heaven. He that is assured of an Eternal Life in Heaven, need not, nay will not much fear a Temporal death here upon Earth. Christians, the time is coming when you and all things and persons in this World must take your leaves one of another and part for ever; what then, O Christian, will bear up thy Spirit at such a time? why nothing less than the sense and hopes of the love of God, and of thy Interest in Christ, some Evidences of a work of Grace upon thy Soul, which is an earnest and foretaste of Heaven and Glory: These are the only things that will bear up thy Soul in a dying hour. When a Man hath attained to some well grounded Assurance of his Interest in God and Christ, and thereby of his Right and Title unto Heaven, then are things in a good posture with him, and he in a readiness for Death and the Grave: And how light will that Soul make of death, that hath the assured hopes of Heaven and Glory to encourage him to go through it? He that by Faith lives in the daily Contemplations of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven, walking in the Light of God's Countenance, and is able to say, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that when this Earthly Tabernacle of his Body shall be dissolved into dust, that he hath a Building of God, an House not made with hands, Eternal in the Heavens, which death will bring him unto, and this is all the hurt death can do him; he that hath such an Assurance as this is, cannot but welcome death, and embrace it not only with Contentment, but with Delight and Joy, and even then when his Soul is struggling and striving to get loose from his Body, with what Holy Longing and vehemency of desire will he cry out and say, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

C H A P. IV.

Of willingness and unwillingness to Die. Difference between Christians in reference unto Death. Whether it be lawful to desire Death. In what cases it may, and in what not. A willingness to Die may be even in Wicked Men, and sometimes they may Die peaceably and quietly, though Death is never comfortable and happy to them. In the Best there may be an unwillingness to Die, though a Saint, as a Saint, is always desirous of Death. Reasons that should encourage the People of God always to be willing to Die. Believers should not only desire to Die, but they should long for Death.

D*Death in it self is not desirable, nor can it be; Nature not only shuns, but abhors it; nor is it possible that Nature should be reconciled to that which seeks its Annihilation and Destruction, as Death doth: And accordingly as these Fears are either strengthened and increased by Sin and Guilt, or conquered and overcome by Grace, so are we more or less enclined towards, or averse from Death. To be willing to Die, when God calls us to it, is a thing greatly to be desired, and argues no small attainment in Grace, when we do it upon good grounds: And yet sometimes to be unwilling to Die is not to be condemned as evil and sinful. To be willing to Die, that we may be with Christ, when*

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when God calls us to it, is a frame of *Soul*, in which the *People of God* should always be desirous to be found; but yet to be desirous to *Live*, when either the *Great Work* of a *Christian* is not finished, or when his *Life* may tend to the *Glory of God* and the *Good* of his *Church*, is that which is not sinful or unlawful; we may see this *Truth* both in *David* and *Hezekiah*; in *David* in *Psal.* 6. 4, 5. *Deliver my Soul, O Lord, spare me for thy Mercy-sake, for in Death there is no remembrance of thee.* *David* at this time being troubled in *Mind*, under the apprehensions of *God's Wrath*, and so wanting the assurance of his *Love*, as you may read in the *Psalms*, prays that he might be *spared*. And so *Hezekiah*, *Isai.* 38. 2. prays for a *longer time of Life*; as for other *Reasons*, so for this as one, because having begun a *Reformation in the Church of God*, he was desirous to *live*, that he might carry it on farther to the *Glory of God* and the *Good* of his *Church*. A *Christian* ought so to *live*, not only as to be prepared for *Death*, but so as to be willing to *die*; but yet he is a *true Christian*, who though he doth not *die* to willingly, yet *dies* preparedly; he that *dies* preparedly and willingly, *dies* most comfortably; but yet he that *dies* preparedly, *dies* safely and happily.

In reference unto *Death*, there is a great difference between *Nominal Christians* and *Real Christians*; and also between one *true Christian* and another. There is a difference in reference unto *Death*, between those that are called *Christians*, but yet are not *truly* so: Some there are whose *Consciences* are so *awakened* upon a *Death-bed*, setting their *Sins* before their *Faces* with such horrible bloody *Circumstances*, and withal representing the *Wrath* of *God*, and the *Everlasting Torments of Hell*, as due unto them for their *Sins*, that they cry out in
Horror

Horror and Despair, their Sins are greater than can be forgiven; and feeling a Hell in their Consciences here, they die under Desperation of ever escaping Hell hereafter, or of obtaining Mercy and Pardon from God: This was the case of Judas, who under Horrors of Conscience, despairing of Mercy, endeavours to ease his Conscience, by laying violent hands upon himself, and is, as the Scripture saith, gone to his own place. Others there are, who though they would be called Christians, yet are not so indeed; but yet are so bold and confident in Death, that Heaven is theirs, as if they were in the possession of it already; Our Lord tells us of some, in Luke 13. 25. who had such strong presumptions of Heaven, that with a confident boldness they knock at Heaven's Gate, crying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; as if there were no more to be done, but only the opening of the door, and letting them into Heaven; but you know what Answer our Lord returns them, I know you not, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity. Both these sorts of Persons, the despairing Sinner, and the presumptuous Sinner, are alike miserable in their Death, though they differ vastly from true and real Christians; for they die neither happily nor comfortably; for they die under the guilt of their Sins, and so perish for ever, which no true Christian doth. And as Hypocrites and sincere Christians differ in their Death; so also do true and real Christians differ in the manner of their dying; some when they come to lie upon their Death-beds, God is pleased to withdraw the light of his Countenance and the manifestations of his Love and Favour from them; and in their apprehensions God seems to have cast them off, and will be favourable to them no more; and though their Life draws nigh to the Grave, yet their Soul is full of trouble; they are so in the dark, and can see no light,

light, in such a *State of desertion*, that God seems to have forsaken them, their *Sun* is as it were *setting in a Cloud*; and in this *State of dismal darkness* they *die*, not knowing what shall become of their *Souls* for ever; which yet go safely to *Heaven*, being built upon the *Rock of Ages*, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, against which the *Gates of Death and Hell* shall never prevail. Some again there are who though they are *true Christians*, yet are *weak Christians*; though they have the *Grace of God in Truth*, yet they have it not in that *growth and strength* that some have; their *Faith* is true, but they are not strong in *Faith*; they love the *Lord Jesus* in *sincerity*, but not with that *fervour and ardour* that some do; they have a *good Hope* towards God, but their *Hope* is not *lively and operative*: Such *Christians* as these now, though they *take Death patiently*, yet they *would willingly live*; they go indeed when God by *Death* calls for them, but they could wish that it would *please God to stay* for them a little longer; they have some *good Hopes of Heaven* when they *die*, but they desire a little more time to *live* here upon *Earth*; they *love God* more than all *Things and Persons* whatsoever, but yet their *affections* are not so fully taken off from the *World*, nor from their *Friends and Relations* as they should be; they are not *wrack'd and tormented* with *perplexing fears of Wrath and Hell*, but yet they are not *ravish'd* with the *Joys of Heaven*. Concerning the *Death* of such as these, we must say, *Blessed are they that thus die in the Lord*; for though they have not that *assurance* that some have, and so *die* not so *comfortably* as to *sense and feeling* as they do; yet have they that *Faith and Affiance* in the *Lord Jesus Christ*, whereby they *die happily*: But then there are *others* that are *strong Christians*, grown *Men in Christ*, who have attained unto such a full

assurance of Faith, that they are not only willing to die, but are desirous of Death, being persuaded that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor length, nor depth, nor any Creature, shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus: for they know in whom they have believed, and with whom they have intrusted the everlasting Concernments of their Immortal Souls; and that he is able and faithful; yea, and will also keep that good thing that they have committed unto him unto that day. And therefore they can with a Holy Triumph through Christ say, O Death where is thy sting, O Grave where is thy Victory; thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore they can with chearfulness commit one half of themselves, that is, their Bodies, unto the Grave, where though they know it shall turn to Corruption and Rottenness; yet that troubles them not; because they know also that by the Power of God it shall be raised up a most Glorious Body at the last Day; for they are assured that their Redeemer lives, and they believe that he shall stand at the last day upon the Earth; and not only so, but because he lives they believe that they shall live also: And though for the present Worms destroy their Bodies, yet in their Flesh they shall see God; whom they shall see for themselves, and their Eyes shall behold him, and not anothers, and that to their everlasting Joy and Comfort. Now to such as these, Death is both happy and comfortable also; and therefore they are desirous to be dissolved, and to be with Christ which is best of all.

But

But now a *Question* may arise here: Is it not Lawful to desire, or wish for Death?

To this I *Answer*, negatively, and positively: in some cases it is unlawful and sinful, and in some cases it may be lawful and commendable.

First, negatively, wherein it is sinful and unlawful. And so for any to wish for, or to desire Death through impatience or discontent in any condition, because they cannot have their own Wills; but are crost in their desires, this is sinful: This was the Sin of *Jonah*, who because God had smitten the Gourd from which he received some refreshment, presently he falls into a *Passion*, and in a discontented fit he concludes the matter, that it was better for him to die than to live, *Jonah* 4. 8. but God knew it was better for him to live than to die; and therefore in his pity he spares him that he might repent of his Sin. This was the *Infirmity* of *Elijah*, which the *Apostle* seems to take notice of, when he tells us, He was a Man of like Infirmities with us, *Jam.* 5. 17. for as to any other Infirmities of that Holy Man, the *Scripture* is silent, but it takes notice of this, that when he was persecuted by *Jezabel's* Cruelties and fled for his Life, under fear and infidelity, in *1 Kings* 19. and 24. he cry'd out, It is enough, O Lord, now take away my Life, for I am no better than my Fathers. These fits of passion and discontent are sinful, and not to be justified; and yet how frequent is it for Men thus to vent their discontents when any trouble befalls them, that croseth their Wills; presently nothing will serve their turns but Death: O that they were Dead. I will not say what once I heard spoken to be always true in this case; that such Persons by wishing for Death, wish

" for *Hell and Damnation* with it; I dare not say so, least I should offend against the *Generation* of the *Righteous*: But this I will say, that there are many *wicked prophane wretches*, who when something doth *cross* and *vex* them, instantly cry out, *Oh that they were dead!* to whom, if *God* should not be more *merciful* to their *Souls*, than they themselves are to their *Bodies*, but take them at their word, and presently *strike* them *dead*, it may be feared he must also by *striking* their *Bodies* into the *Grave*, *smite* their *Souls* into *Hell*; they allowing themselves no space and time for their *Repentance*. O that such *Persons* would seriously consider what they do when they *wish* such an *End* may befall them.

Again, to *wish* for *Death* absolutely is *sinful*, though we are under pains that are more painful than *Death* it self. *Nature* puts us upon desiring to *live*, and *Grace* should put us upon desiring to *live*, because *God* wills it, though we be under *more afflictions*; for as it is our *Holiness* to do the *will* of *God* while we *live*, so it is our *Holiness* to be content to *live*, while we suffer according to his *will*. To desire *Death*, because our *lives* are full of *troubles*, is a *sinful wish* or *desire*; for *God* may, and often hath as much use of our *lives*, when we are in an *afflicted condition*, as when we are in a *prosperous condition*; a *sickly Body*, yea a *sick Bed*, may bring as much *Glory* to *God*, as a *healthful Constitution*; and we may do as much *service* when we are bound in *Chains* and in a *Prison*, as when we enjoy the *greatest Freedom* and *Liberty*. *Passive Obedience* brings as much *Honour* to *God* as *Active* doth. When you lie under any *troubles* therefore, wish not for *Death*; beg of *God* rather that he would remove those *Evils* from you, than remove
you

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you from those *Evils*: God hath a *thousand ways* to let us out of *trouble*, though he doth not open the door of the *Grave* to let us in *thither*. Pray that your *Afflictions* may be *sanctified*, and that your *Spirits* may be raised up above your *troubles* while you *live*, and seek not, nor desire freedom from them by *Death*: For a *Christian* to bear a *burden* well, is more *desireable* than to be *delivered* from it; especially, if while we are *suffering* our *selves*, we are doing good unto *others*. A *Christian* should be *contented*; yea, he should *rejoice* in *suffering* *Evils* that lie upon, when he doth good thereby unto *others*. He that is of a *gracious publick Spirit* will *triumph* over *Personal Troubles* and *Afflictions*, so long as he sees God making use of him as a *help* or *blessing* to the *publick*: And though he longs to *die* for himself, knowing it will be much to his *Advantage*, because when he departs hence he shall be *with Christ*, which is far better; yet he should be *unwilling* to *die*, so long as he can say with *St. Paul*, that for him to *abide in the Flesh* is and will be more *needful* for *others*. To be willing to *deferr* our *Glory* and *Happiness* for a time, that God may be *glorified*, and others *benefited* by us here, is an *excellent frame* of *Spirit* in any *Christian*.

Secondly, *positive*ly, it is *lawful* in *some cases* to *desire Death*. And thus none but a *true Christian* can truly *desire to die*. Now there are *three cases* in which it may be *lawful* for a *Christian* to *desire Death*.

First, *When God brings a Christian into such a condition, as that he may bring God more Honour and Glory by his Death, than by his Life*: In such a case it is *lawful* to *desire Death*; and this was the case of *Sampson*, who was a *Type* of *Christ*: The *Philistines* having brought him into a *low* and *suffering condition*, though partly through his own

Sin ; yet being animated by the *Spirit* of *God*, and knowing that by his *Death* he should destroy many of the *Enemies* of *God*, he begs *strength* from him thereunto, which *God* in an *extraordinary* manner granted him ; for he took hold of the *Pillars* of the *House*, and so pulled down the *House* upon himself and upon the *Philistines*, slaying thereby more at his *Death* than he did in all his *Life*. This was the case of many of the *Martyrs*, who being called to suffer for the *Truth*, were very desirous to die, knowing that their *Death* would tend more to the *Glory* of *God* than their *Life*, and therefore they willingly and chearfully sealed to the *Truth* of *God* with their *Blood*.

Secondly, *It is lawful to wish for Death, that we may be free from offending of God.* *Sin* is a miserable *Thralldom* and *Bondage* unto a *Child* of *God* ; to have a *Nature* within him that is continually inclining him unto, and putting him upon that which is *sinful* and *provoking* unto *God*, is that which a *Holy Soul* cannot tell how to bear. Oh to find a *Law* in his *Members* always warring against the *Law* of his *Mind*, and leading him *Captive* to the *Law* of *Sin* and *Death* ! It is that which makes his *Life* burthensome to him. This I know works little upon *wicked Men* ; for when they are acting of *Sin* they are in their *Element* ; but to a *Gracious Soul*, unto whom the *loving kindness* of *God*, as *David* speaks, is better, than *Life*, to [such a one a *sinful impure Nature*, whereby he offends and displeaseth *God*, is more bitter than *Death* ; and therefore he is continually making out after that *State*, wherein he shall be *without Sin* ; while he is here he knows he cannot be free from all *Sin* ; but yet he follows after it ; if he may apprehend that for which he is apprehended of *Christ Jesus* ; and therefore

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fore forgetting the things that are behind, he reacheth forth unto those things that are before, pressing forward towards the mark for the price of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, if by any means he may attain to the Resurrection of the Dead; that is, to that State of perfect Holiness, and freedom from Sin, which he shall arrive to at the Resurrection of the Dead. And because he sees he cannot but Sin whilst he is here, and that dying only will be the end of Sinning; therefore he longs for Death, that he may come to an end of Sinning.

Thirdly, *It is lawful to wish for Death, that we may come to the full and perfect enjoyment of God and Christ in Glory.* In this frame of Spirit we find the Apostle, when he crys out in that Holy Agony, *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.* The Scripture it self makes it the Character of a true Christian, that he is one that loves the appearing of Christ, and this is that which cannot be enjoyed without Death; now that which we love we wish the enjoyment of, and consequently we desire to use those means that tend thereunto. Our Lord himself, in Joh. 17. prays for all Believers, that they might be where he is, that they might behold and enjoy his Glory; and hath taught us to pray that the Kingdom of God might come; by which is meant not only the Kingdom of Grace, but the Kingdom of Glory also. And indeed true love unto Christ will put us upon desiring to be with him; for that is the property of true love, always to manifest an ardent and strong desire after the enjoyment of its beloved Object. If now a Christian, who hath enjoyed Communion with God in his Ordinances, desires the sincere milk of the Word that he may grow thereby: And if that Soul that hath tasted how Good and Gracious the Lord is in any Duty, is ready to cry

out with David, in the 42 Psalm, *As the Heart panteth after the Water Brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God; my Soul is athirst for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God, that he may see his Power and his Glory, so as he hath seen him in the Sanctuary.* If a Christian now so much desires the enjoyment of God in his Ordinances, wherein there is always a mixture of Sin and Pollution going along with them; should he not, doth he not much more then desire the enjoyment of God in Heaven? where there shall be a perfect freedom from all Sin, and all sinful mixtures, that here are a continual grief to a Gracious Soul, and a just provocation to a Holy God; where he shall be for ever with the Lord, beholding the beauty of his Face, and being fully satisfied and delighted with the enjoyment of his presence, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

But though it may be lawful to wish for, or to desire Death, when we may thereby bring Glory to God, when we may thereby be free from Sin, and come to the perfect enjoyment of God and Christ in Glory; yet in all these cases, we must take in these Cautions, that for the time of our Death, we must still refer our selves to the good will and pleasure of God: For though it may be lawful to wish for Death, when we may thereby glorifie God; yet we must not absolutely wish for Death so, because our Hearts are very treacherous, and may easily impose upon us and deceive us herein. And though to wish for Death that we may be freed from Sin, is a holy wish; yet we must not wish that absolutely neither, but must herein refer our selves to the pleasure of God, how long he will have us to conflict with our Lusts and Corruptions, bearing about with us a Body of Sin and Death. And though it be a
holy

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holy wish, to desire to die that we may enjoy God and Christ in Glory ; yet must we not wish for that absolutely ; for though the Holy Apostle desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ ; yet was he in a strait, and what to choose, he tells us he wist not, and we know how he qualifies and debates the business; and what the issue came to, you may read in 1 Phil. 21. 22, 23. Still therefore in all our desires after Death in general , yet as to the particular time when, we must always say, Not our Wills, but thy Will, O Lord, be done.

This *holy desire of Death*, now is that which can only be found in the *Godly*; for they only can *desire Death upon good grounds*; but yet there may be a *willingness to die even in Wicked Men*, and sometimes they may *die peaceably and quietly*, though *Death is never comfortable and happy to them*. That they may *sometimes die willingly and peaceably* is often seen; they may have no bands in their *Death* as others have, as the *Psalmist* speaks, but their *strength is firm*; they are not under *troubles and disquietments* because of their *Sins*, and the *wrath of God*; *Conscience* doth not fly in their *Faces*, by *terrible reflections upon their former wicked Lives*; *God* doth not make them *possess their Sins* in the bitterness of their *Souls*; and as for the *Devil* he will not *vex and trouble* them, that is not for his *Advantage*: for he knows while they are under a *spirit of security and senselessness* he hath them *fast enough*, and therefore he will not *Torment* them before their *time*, lest they should get out of his *Clutches*: But all is very *quiet and peaceable* as to *outward appearance*, and they *die*, as it is commonly expressed by *ignorant Persons*, as *quiet as a Lamb*: This may be the *State and Condition of a Wicked Man upon a Death-Bed*; he may *die quietly* without any doubt-

ing upon his Spirit, as to his *Eternal State*, as if all were *well* and should be *well* with him for ever; not that his *Sins* are pardoned and *God* reconciled; nor that his *Conscience* hath not wherewith to trouble him, because it is *silent*; no the *Worm of Conscience* is *Hungry*, and hath *matter enough* to Torment him in *Hell* to *Eternity*, but it is not permitted to prey and feed upon the *Sinner* as yet: This *peace* and *quietness* that he now enjoys is not from any knowledge of his good *Estate*, but from his *Ignorance* how *bad* his *State* is; he sees not the *Wrath* of *God* hanging over his *Head*, nor the *Justice* of *God* set in opposition against him; and therefore he goes on quietly to his *Grave*. As all the trouble and *disquietness* of a *Godly Man* in *Death*, is because he is ignorant of the *goodness* of his *State* and *Condition*; so the *quietness* and *peace* of a *Wicked Man* in *Death*, is because he is ignorant of the *badness* of his *State* and *Condition*. If a *Godly Man* dies under fears and troubles, it is not because his *State* is not good, but because he knows not that his *State* is good: And if a *wicked Man* dies in peace, it is not because his *State* is not *bad*, but because he knows not that his *State* is *bad*. Did a *Godly Man* know the *goodness* of his *State* and *Condition*, his troubles and fears would soon be turned into joy and rejoicings: And did a *Wicked Man* know the *badness* of his *State* and *Condition*, his *peace* and *quietness* would soon be turned into mourning and lamentation; and though now *Friends* and *Acquaintance*, yea, his own *Heart*, and *Satan* also may flatter him; yet *Death* will open his *Eyes* and undeceive him, and then he shall know for ever by sad experience, the *Truth* of that *Scripture*, in the 57 of *Esay* last verse, *There is no Peace, saith the Lord, unto the Wicked.*

Now,

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Now, as a *wicked Man* may die willingly; yea, peaceably; so in a *Godly Man* there may be sometimes an *unwillingness to die*, though a *Godly Man*, acting as a *Godly Man* ought, he is always desirous of *Death*. That there may be in the *best of God's Children*, an *unwillingness to die*, the Scripture is clear: Thus was it with the *Prophet*, *Jer. 37. 20.* Now I pray thee, O my Lord the King, let my supplication be accepted before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the House of Jonathan the Scribe, least I die there. And our Lord, forewarning Peter of the manner of his *Death*, tells him that he should be carried whither he would not, *John 21. 18.* It is with many of the *People of God*, as it was with *Lot*, who though his *Righteous Soul* was vexed day by day, by beholding the *unclean conversation* of the *Sodomites*, *2 Pet. 2. 18.* Yet O how he lingered when *God* would have taken him from thence? as you may see, *Gen. 19. 16.* So is it with many of the *Saints of God*, who while they live in this *World*, are always vexed, not only with the *corruptions* of their own *Hearts*, but also with the *wickedness* of the *times*; yet are they if not *unwilling*, yet not so willing to leave the *World* as they should be; but this *unwillingness* of theirs proceeds not from the want of *Grace*, but from the weakness of their *Grace*. In the *best of God's Children* there is *Flesh* as well as *Spirit*; *Sin* and *Corruption* as well as *Grace*; and if at any time *Sin* and *Corruption* prevail over *Grace*, as sometimes they do, no wonder if they be *unwilling to die*. Those of the *People of God* that do believe, do yet believe but in part; and though the *Spirit* be ready in them, yet the *Flesh* is weak: But though there be some *unwillingness* in the *best to die*; yet they know and are sensible, that it is their *Sin* and *fault*; they know they ought to be willing to die, and even in this
thei-

their Spirits in them strive against this *weakness* of the *Flesh*, and in the end they conquer their *fears*, and overcome their *backwardness* and *unwillingness* to die; according to that *Gracious Promise* in *Psal. 29. 11.* the *Lord* will give strength unto his *People*, the *Lord* will bless his *People* with *Peace*. The *Nature* of *Grace* is such, that it will work it self through all *fears* and *doubts*, both as to *Sin* and *Death*: And when once the *Eye* of a *Christian's Faith* is opened to look within the *vail*, and to discover something of the *Glory* and *Happiness* of *Heaven*, and of the *Soul's interest* therein, nothing then satisfies such a *Soul*, but to be absent from the *Body*, and to be present with the *Lord*. A *Godly Man*, acting as a *Godly Man*, is one that is always desirous of *Death*, because he knows the *day* of his *Death* will not only be better to him than the *day* of his *Birth*, but better also than any *day* of his *Life*.

Now that the *People of God* may always be willing to die, there are several *Arguments* that should encourage them unto it; and I shall but name a few in general.

First, the *Afflictions* and *Distresses* that the *People of God* are *Subject* to in this *World*, and that above others, may be one *Reason* to encline them to a *willingness* to die; not out of a *discontented mind*, because they are *weary* of, or *impatient* under their *sufferings*: This was the *Sin* of *Moses*, *Numb. 11. 15.* when he prayed unto *God*, if thou deal thus with me, I pray thee kill me out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness: This is a great *Sin* in the *Wicked*, and sometimes an *Infirmity* that the *Godly* fall into; but the *Scripture* allows it not in any. Faith and Patience under

under the afflicting hand of God is very becoming a Christian, but *Impatience* and *Discontent* is to be abominated. Though a Christian knows that it is better for him to die than to live; yet out of a *Fit* of *Impatience* and *Discontent*, because of *Affliction*, we ought not presently to wish for *Death*. St. Paul knew it was far better for him to die than to live: He tells us so *Phil. 1. 21.* yet durst not he desire it absolutely, though a Man subject to many and great *Afflictions*; but was in a strait what to do, as himself saith, and therefore submits himself to the Will of God. Yet is it not utterly unlawful for a Christian to desire *Death* that he may be free from the *Miseries* of this *Life*, because these Things occasion the drawing forth of *Sin* and *Corruption*, whereby God is dishonoured, his Spirit discomposed, that he cannot serve God with that *Freedom* and *Chearfulness* of Soul, as he might and as he desires. Every day a Christian must look for *Crosses* and *Afflictions*, and sufficient to every day are the *Evils* thereof, *Luke 9. 23.* And therefore a Christian may upon good grounds desire to be loosed from those *Miseries* and *Afflictions*, if it be the will of God: But in the mean time till he can have his desires in this Case, let him in *patience* possess his Soul.

Secondly, Another Reason that may make the People of God willing to die, may be in respect of the wicked, that they may not be always Spectators of those abominable Wickednesses, whereby God is daily dishonoured, his Name blasphemed. This made *Rebekah* desirous of *Death*; for when *Esau* had taken ungodly Wives, it is said they were a grief of Mind to *Isaac* and *Rebekah*, because they knew that God was greatly dishonoured thereby; therefore says *Rebekah* unto *Isaac*, I am weary of my life, because of the Daughters of *Heth*; and if *Jacob* take a Wife

a Wife among them, such as those that are of the Daughters of the Land, what good will my life do me, Gen. 27. 46. O who can express what grief it is to those that fear God, to live in the midst of a wicked and ungodly Generation, that are continually provoking God by their wicked lives? What godly Man's heart can but bleed, to hear the Name of God rent and torn by cursed Oaths and Hellish Blasphemies, to behold the Uncleanneſs, the Drunkenneſs, the Lying, the scoffing at Godlineſs, the corrupt, filthy, scurrilous, idle Talking that overflows in all Places; so that those that fear God had better be any where almost than in the Company of most Men? This was a grief and vexation to the Soul of righteous Lot; for in seeing and hearing the filthy Conversation of those wicked Sodomites, they vexed his righteous Soul from day to day by their unlawful Deeds. This made the Prophet David cry out, in Psalm 120. 5, 9. *Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the Tents of Kedar.* No wonder therefore that those whose Souls are affected with the dishonour of God, are desirous to depart out of this World, and cry out, *Oh that they had the wings of a Dove, for then would they flee away and be at rest.*

Thirdly, Another thing that may make the People of God willing to die, is freedom from the Temptations of Satan. The Devil is the great Enemy of Mankind; miserable he is himself, and envies that any should be otherwise than himself is; and therefore he makes use of all his Craft and Subtilties against Man. And herein Christians are much endangered, and hereby he frequently manageth his Temptations with Success; for many are his Wiles and Devices that he makes use of to draw the People of God into Sin. What unwearied Assaults from
Satan

Satan do many *Christians* labour under, not only for *Days* and *Weeks*, but for *Months* and *Years*, whereby he *allures* and *enticeth* them with *restless Importunities* to the *Commission* of *some Sin* or other, which they are no more able to *fly* from, than they are to *out-run* themselves? Now to any that have *tasted* the *Sweetness* of *Holiness*, what can be more *hateful* than *daily Instigations* to *Sin*? And to such, who *understand* the *Blessedness* of *Communion* with *God*; what can be more *bitter*, than to find themselves *chain'd* as it were to a *Devil*, who makes such *Applications* of *vile Objects* to their *Fancies* continually, that they cannot in the least turn themselves from? Oh *how irksome* must it needs be to a *gracious Heart*, to be *always haunted* with the *Spectacle* and *Image* of *some Sin*, even as *black as Hell*? Now this being the *Case* of the *People* of *God*, to be *unceasingly* followed with the *Temptations* of *Satan*; how *willing* should they be to *die*, because never till then shall they be out of the *reach* of his *fiery Darts*? For as it is in *Heaven* only that there is no *Sin*, so it is in *Heaven* only that there shall be no *Temptations* unto *Sin*.

[Fourthly, *Another thing that may make the People of God always willing to die, is a perfect freedom from all Sin.* While they are here they *sin*, and are in continual *danger* of *falling* from *God*; and no *Man* can tell how *far* any of them may *fall*; for though it be *admitted* that they cannot *fall* *totally* and *finally*, yet they may *fall* *dreadfully*, and *fearfully*, as we read of some in *Scripture*, who have *lain long, sighing* and *groaning* under *broken Bones*, and *wounded Consciences*. Our *Natures* are so *polluted* with the *Leprosie* of *Sin*, that we shall never be *perfectly cured* of it while we are in this *World*. Under the *Law* we read, that when any *earthen Vessels*

Vessels were defiled, they could not be sufficiently purged till they were broken in pieces, Lev. 11. 33. The spiritual Improvement whereof is to teach us, that we can never be perfectly cleansed from the pollution of our Natures till we are broken in pieces by Death. The best Man's Sanctification is not perfect here, the holiest Man is not thoroughly cleansed while he lives, but hath much of Filthiness remaining in him. The wise Man, in Prov. 20. 9. silences all Men with this Question, Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my Sin? Who can say so? Why, none can. We may do much in the work of Mortification, in the use of Means as the Spirit of God directs us in the Word; we may by the strength of the Spirit keep Sin from reigning in our mortal Bodies, Rom. 6. 10. But though it Reign not as a King, yet it may Rule as a Tyrant, and we be brought into Captivity by it; and by force kept in Bondage under it sometimes. How willing therefore should a Christian be to die, that he may be free from Sin; for he that is dead, saith the Apostle, Rom. 6. 7. is free'd from Sin. Death only will free us from the danger and possibility of offending God any more; for then we shall come to the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, Heb. 12. 23.

Why then, O Christian; shouldst thou desire to linger long here upon Earth, and to spin out a miserable Life in this VWorld, whereof Sin and Sorrow will have the greatest Share. Here the best Christians are engaged in perpetual Conflicts between Sin and Grace; Sin will not yield, and Grace cannot yield; Corruption compels one way, and Grace commands another. Haste therefore, O Christian, out of this troublesome Contest; yea, make haste to Heaven; for there, and there only it is that this Controversie will be ended; for there

we shall no more live in fear of new Sins, nor in sorrow for old Sins; but all Sorrow and Sighing shall cease; all Tears shall there be wiped from our Eyes, and which is better, all Sin shall be rooted out of our hearts for ever. Upon this Account now Death is not only necessary in it self, but it is that which the People of God should embrace with the greatest willingness and chearfulness that may be.

But this is not all; for the People of God must go one step higher, and it is what the Word of God doth require, and that is not only to be content or willing to die, but long for Death. To be contented to die is a good Temper of Soul, and may be an Argument of the Truth of Grace, for it is seldom or never found in a wicked man, to be sure not from a right Principle. But truly, Christians, this is no such great Matter in comparison of what we should labour to attain unto. Muse seriously upon it a while, O Christian: Is it not a strange kind of Expression to drop from the mouth of a Saint, that he is content to be happy; that one that professeth all his Happiness lies in the hopes he hath of enjoying God in Heaven; and that it is the End and Design of his Life, that he may attain unto this; and that yet when he comes to speak of Death, he should only say, he is contented to die that he may be happy in the Enjoyment of God? We use not to speak thus concerning the World; here Men are not said to be content to be rich, but covetous after Riches; not willing to be advanced, but ambitious after it: And why then should it be said only of a Christian, that he is contented to be with God, and contented to be in Heaven? Why, Oh why should not the Soul, the more noble, excellent Part of a Man be carried out with vehement and earnest longings after its proper and full Happiness, as well as the Body,

that

that vile Part of Man is carried with restless Appetite after Health, Safety, and Liberty? Why should a Soul alone be contented to be happy, when all things in the World do so ardently court, and so vehemently pursue their respective Ends, and several Perfections? Truly this is not that Frame and Temper that Christians ought to content themselves with; but their Souls should be raised up to a higher pitch, even to a holy longing after their being ever with the Lord. It is the Duty of a Christian to look out after so much Enjoyment of the blessed God as we are now capable of; and because we cannot fully and perfectly enjoy him in this Life, to long after the time of our departure hence, and with holy Pantings of Soul breath forth earnest Desires that we may be fully and eternally happy in the Enjoyment of him.

Be not therefore, O my Soul, contented only, but be holily covetous, and full of vehement longings after an Eternity of Blessedness in the Enjoyment of God; and because this Body is that which hinders this desired and longed for Happiness, though thou may'st not dissolve and break it into pieces thy self, yet with Submission to the Divine Will, wish it were broken, desire that it may be dissolved. And though thou must be contented to live God's time, yet henceforth be desirous of, and long to die.

To set this a little home upon thy Conscience, O Christian, consider, that this Frame of Soul is that which the Scripture makes the Temper and the Duty of all Believers: Indeed there are few Professors that are of this Evangelical Temper of Soul; yea, but few that are willing to believe they ought to be so: But yet this Frame of Soul is made the Character of a sincere Christian; the Scripture abounds with Expressions of this Nature, Luk 21.28.

Our

Our Lord speaking concerning the *day of Judgment*, for the *encouragement of Believers*, bids them *look up, and lift up their Heads for their Redemption draw nigh*; by which our Lord means, not a bare speculation, but a beholding with joy and longing for that day and time. 2 Tim. 4. 8. *The Lord shall give a Crown of Righteousness to them that love his appearing.* And in Tit. 2. 13. we are commanded to live godly in this present World, as those that are looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. So in 2 Pet. 3. 12. *What manner of Persons, says the Apostle, ought we to be in all Holy Conversation and Godliness; looking for, and hastning to the coming of the Day of God?* By these Scriptures, it appears, what is the nature and temper, the disposition and inclination of a Godly Man, even to look, to love, to long, and to hasten unto the enjoyment of God; for that which is of God in any Soul, must needs carry the Soul after God.

But here I am afraid least some weak Christians should be troubled, because they cannot find these ardent desires and holy longings of Soul in themselves after their dissolution and enjoyment of God.

Now that I may not discourage any weak Believer, nor make the Hearts of those sad, whom God would not have made sad, I shall add a few words, though not for encouragement unto sloathfulness, yet for support against fears and despondency.

Therefore, O Christian, search thine own Heart, and see how it is with thee; and if thou findest it is so, as the objection intimates; see then if thou canst find

find out the cause thereof; possibly thou art *grown careless* in thy *spiritual watch*, or thou *givest* too much *liberty* to thy self in things that are *lawful*; the *World* it may be is got too near thy *Heart*, thy *Affections* run out too much after it. And no wonder then, if while this *frame* and *temper* continues, and things are thus out of *order* with thee, thou dost not long after *Heaven*, nor art *willing* to *die*, though it be the only way by which thou *canst* come to the *enjoyment* of *God*.

If upon *Examination* of thy *Heart*, thou dost not find it thus with thee; why then *consider*, though this *frame* of *Soul* be *Characteristical* of a *true Christian*; yet you must *consider* also, that the *same Character* of a *Christian*, that is a *cause* of joy and *rejoicing* to some; yea, to a *Man's* own self sometimes; at another time may be a *cause* of *fear* and *doubting* to him; not but that, that which distinguisheth a *true Christian* from a *Hypocrite*, is the same at one time that it is at another, only we cannot see nor discover so clearly the *State* of our *Souls* towards *God* by it at one time as at another. And this is the *Reason* why some are so lifted up with *joy*; yea, with *bo'y* longing of *Soul* in hopes of the *Glory* of *God*; when others are cast down under *fears* and *doubts*, as if they had no *hopes* of, or at least no *present Interest* in, or *title* unto any such thing.

But farther, Art thou *fearful*, O *Christian*, of thy *Self*, because thou canst not *feel* this *ardency* of *desires* in thee after thy *dissolution*, and the *Glorious appearing* of *Jesus Christ*, so as to look and long for the coming of these things? Why know, O *troubled Soul*, that every *Character* of a *Christian* is not discernable by all *Christians* at all times, and

in all conditions: Thou mayest have that in thee, which is the cause of these longing desires in others, though at present it doth not work so strongly in thee that thou mayest sensibly feel the power of its operations, thus drawing forth thy Heart and Affections in this ardent and vehement manner. Grace though weak and in the seed hath a tendency in it, and is making out after this holy longing and rejoicing of Soul in hopes of the Glory of God; though there may be the intervention of some time before there be an attaining to it. If there be the remainders of the Spirit of Bondage in thee to fear, in this case Grace in thee is not come to that perfection that it is in others; but yet it will be growing and increasing in thee; and as thy Grace grows stronger and stronger, so will thy fears of Death and Judgment grow weaker and weaker.

Furthermore, O troubled Soul, though thou canst not feel thy Soul breasting forth it self in these holy longings & desires after thy Dissolution, the beholding of the face of God, and the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet dost thou believe that it will be incomparably better for thee to be with Christ, than to abide here on Earth; and therefore though Death be dreadful to think of in it self; yet seeing it is the only passage through which God hath appointed our entrance into Heaven; though thou canst not say that thou longest for it; yet art thou willing to entertain it, if God sends it; and though the fears of Death sometimes discourage thee, yet doth not thy belief of, and hope in a future State of Happiness abate those fears, considering the advantages that will follow it. And though it be an amazing thing in thy thoughts to think of coming before the Great and Holy GOD; yet (except when Temptations make thee fear that God will condemn thee for thy Sins)

Sins) hadst thou not rather come to God by Death, than not come to him at all, the enjoyment of whom is thy Soul's utmost Happiness? And though the sight of Christ's coming in the Clouds at the Day of Judgment, in the Glory of his Father, and of the Holy Angels, will be very terrible to behold; and the thoughts thereof strike thee with fear and trembling, when thou considerest thine own sinfulness; and therefore canst not think of that Day with so strong a Faith and Consolation, with such earnestness of desires and holy longing, as some Christians do; yet be not discouraged, though thou dost not long for, yet dost thou love the appearance of Jesus. Canst thou say thou wouldst not take all the pleasures of this World, for thy hopes of the happiness of this Day? And couldst thou attain to that full assurance that some of God's People have, thou wouldst then with earnestness of desire and holy longing of Soul, cry out as the Church doth, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Is it thus with thee, O Soul; why then be not troubled; nay, be comforted; for that which at present is Faith, Hope, Desire and Love, may in a little time be vehement longing and assurance; yea, the riches of the full assurance of Faith. Rest not therefore in any weak desires; but labour for this holy longing of Soul after God, and the Eternal Enjoyment of him in Glory; that in Life and Death your Soul may part and breath after immediate and everlasting Communion with him.

This is that frame of Soul that the People of God ought to labour after, and which many have attained unto; the earnestness and vehemency of whose desires have been so great, that they have been as it were under sweet and delightful agonies of pain, and their Souls even breaking with longings after the presence

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presence of God and Christ in Glory. Examples of this Nature that might be instanced in are many; I shall mention one, of which I was an Eye and Ear Witness; the Person was one of a middle rank and quality in the World, but of great eminency in Grace and Holiness while living, and full of Joy and Peace when dying. It pleased God, who appoints us the bounds and place of our Habitations, to cast my lot into a Religious Family, where this Godly Person lived, whose Memory to me is and ever shall be very precious; after I had been there some time, it pleased God to lay this Person upon a sick bed, which proved a death-bed, whose Mouth was always full of Holy and Heavenly Discourse, and as Death approached nearer and nearer, those Heavenly Expressions were with greater earnestness and frequency repeated; the last Day of whose Life as long as speech continued was spent in uttering continual expressions, full of holy longings and desires after the enjoyment of God and Christ in Glory. Methinks the sweetness of the Melody revives my Spirit still, when I call to remembrance, in my serious thoughts, what I then heard and saw: Oh with what Joy and Delight of Soul was the thoughts of Death entertained! Surely nothing was or could possibly be more welcome to such a Soul, except it were the immediate fruition of God in Heaven; whose Soul in the delightful, much longed for, and panted-after Happiness, in the enjoyment of God, breathed forth continually such expressions as these for many hours together. Come, Lord Jesus, when shall I come and appear before thee, Oh Lord? when Lord, when? Oh come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. And thus this Holy Person died, changing a frail mortal Life on Earth, for an immortal Life in Heaven, where to be and to be most happy is all one.

I could fill up many sheets with wonderful expressions of the loves, longings, pantings, and breathings, that I have read of Holy Souls after the enjoyment of God and Christ, both Martyrs and others. O, cryeth one, the Love of Christ in my Heart casteth a mighty heat; he knoweth that the desire I have to be with him paineth me: I have sick Nights, and frequent fits of Love Fevers for my well-beloved: Nothing is so painful to me as the want of his presence, but it is a sweet pain: O that he would cool my Love-Fever for him with real enjoyment of him. O Great King, says one, why standest thou aloof off? why remainest thou among the Mountains? O well-beloved, why dost thou pain a poor Soul with delays? A long time out of thy Glorious Presence is as two Deaths and as two Hells to me; we must meet, I must see him; hungering and thirsting for Christ hath brought on me such a necessity of enjoying him, that cost what it will I cannot but assure Christ to my Soul; one smile of his Face to me is a Kingdom; a sight of him is worth a World of Worlds. Sweet Jesus, crys one out, wilt thou let me see Heaven to break my Heart, and never give me leave to enjoy it? O fairest where dwellest thou? O never enough admired and adored Godhead, how can Creatures of yesterday be able to enjoy thee? O what pain, crys one, is it, that Time and Sin, should be as so many thousand Miles between a loved, longed for Lord, and a pining Love-sick Soul? Hell, and as I now think, all the pains of it laid on me, could not put me off from loving of him, I would refuse, says one, no condition, not Hell excepted (reserving always God's hatred) to buy the possession and enjoyment of Jesus. Oh closed Doors, and Vails, Curtains, and thick Clouds, crys one, that hold me in pain, while I find the sweet burnings of his Love within me, which many waters cannot quench!

O Death do thy utmost against us: O Torments, O Malice of Men and Devils, bring Hell to help you in Tormenting the Followers of the Lamb, we will desire you to make us too soon happy, and to waite us too soon over the water, to that Land where that Plant, the Plant of Renown grows. O cruel time, that Torments us, and suspends our dearest enjoyments, that we wait for, when we shall be bathed and steeped Soul and Body in the depth of this Love of Loves. I half call, says one, his absence cruel, and that Mask and Vail upon his Face a cruel covering, that hideth such a fair, fair Face from a sick Soul. I dare not challenge himself, but his absence is a Mountain of Iron upon my heavy Heart. Oh when shall we meet! What do we here but sin and suffer! Oh when shall the Night be gone, and the Shadows fly away, and the morning of that long long Day without Cloud or Night dawn! The Spirit and the Bride say come: Oh when shall the Lamb's Wife be ready, and the Bridegroom say I come also! O Time be not so slow, but run; yea, fly away swiftly! O Sun move speedily, and hasten our Banquet! O Heavens cleave asunder, that the bright Face and Head may set it self through the Clouds! O that the Corn were ripe, and this World prepared for his hook! How long is it to the dawning of the Marriage day? O sweet Lord Jesus take wide steps! O my Lord come over the Mountains at one stride, cut short Years, and Months, and Hours, shovel time and days out of the way; post, post, haste our desired, hungred, longed for Meeting; love is sick to hear of till too Morrow; fly, O my beloved, like a Roe or a young Heart upon the Mountains of Separation. O that thou wouldst remove, says one, the covering, and draw aside the Curtain of Time; that thou wouldst rent the Heavens and come down! O that the Shadows and Nights were gone, that

the Day would break, and he that feedeth among the Lilies would cry and call to his Heavenly Trumpeters, make ready and let us go down and fold together the four corners of the World, and Marry the Bride the Lamb's Wife; since he hath looked upon me my Heart is not my own.

But I shall not proceed farther herein, though the Subject be exceeding delightful; but notwithstanding what hath been said herein, I am far from *thinking* that these *holy pantings* and *longings* of Soul are to be found in every Godly Man, or that none are truly Godly but those that find and feel in themselves these *pantings* and *longings* of Soul after the enjoyment of God, in this vehement and ardent manner; no I dare not say so; for I believe *multitudes*; yea, the *generality* of *Believers*, through *slothfulness*, never attain to this *high pitch* of *Grace* and *Assurance* of the *Divine Love* and *Favour*, who yet go to *Heaven* very *safely*; but where there are any that do attain unto this *plerophory* or *full assurance*, such Souls live as it were on the very *Suburbs* of *Heaven* it self: And by this we may see what is the *Duty* of a *Christian* to labour after, and what *sweet peace*, *joy*, and *delight* we all lose, who do not come up to this *frame* and *temper* of Soul, even such as *passeth* our *understandings* to conceive, or our *expressions* to make known; which made a *Godly Man* once cry out in a *holy pang* of love unto *Jesus Christ*, If I can get no more, O let me be pained to all *Eternity* with longing for him, the joy of *hungering* for *Christ* should be my *Heaven* for evermore.

C H A P. V.

Death terrible in its self. It is a dreadful Enemy. Wherein its Enmity doth consist. This Enemy shall be destroyed, though it be the last Enemy that shall be destroyed. Christ by his Death hath overcome Death for Believers, and how far he hath done it. Of the fear of Death, and the Causes thereof. How the fears of Death may be Conquered and overcome. It is very uncomely for Christians to be afraid of Death. It is possible for Christians to live without the fear of Death. How Christians may die with Courage and Joy.

THO' death as it brings Holy Souls to the Eternal Fruition of God, is desirable; yet considered in its self it is dreadful, being accompanied with Diseases and Distempers, the fore-runners of a Dissolution, and Separation between Soul and Body, causing all the Actions and Operations of Life to cease, in which State the Body quickly turns to Corruption and Putrefaction, and in time to common Earth. Now, though this be dreadful unto Nature, yet is there more of Terror in death unto Impenitent sinners, because to them it is not only a Gate to let them into the Grave, but a Gate to let them into Hell; the first death transmitting them unto the second death. And yet how great is the folly of Men that they fear death for that which is least formidable in it, but do not fear it for that which renders it justly terrible? Could death do no more to us than what reacheth to pains and distempers on the out-
ward

ward Man, and the dissolution and destruction of the Body in the Grave, it were then a tolerable evil, but when we shall consider death as a punishment for sin, as that which puts us into an unchangeable Estate, this is that which makes it dreadful and terrible indeed. While we are in this World, which is the time of our preparation for an Eternal State, of Strangers, yea of Enemies we may become Friends; but when death hath once seized upon us, it is impossible our State should then be changed. We cannot now say of the vilest Sinner in the World, that there is no hope of him; we must not write desperation upon the fore-head of the wickedst Man on Earth: but if he dies in that State, then he is lost and undone for ever; for as the Tree falls, so it lies, as death leaves Men so Judgment will find them. And this Judgment is such as is conclusive and never to be Repealed. Hence it is therefore, that take the most hardened Sinner, one whom Custom in sinning hath made past feeling, yet when he comes to die, if Conscience be but awakened, it is impossible for him to look death in the Face without great fears and horrors: Nay, it is a sight so amazing and confounding, that were it not for the Righteousness of Christ, and that Satisfaction he hath made unto the Justice of God, by his death, it were utterly impossible that any Believer should bear up under it: but Blessed be God, the Blood of Christ then speaks Peace, and so Believers are not only supported, but carried comfortably unto Heaven, through the gloomy Valley of the Shadow of death.

Death being thus terrible now, it must needs be looked upon as a dreadful Enemy unto Man. An Enemy now, is one that when he comes against us always comes Armed to do us a mischief: such an Enemy now is death, for ever since the Fall of
Man,

Chap. V. *Death terrible and dreadful.* 125

Man, death hath been *Armed* with a *deadly String* ; now this *String* of *death* whereby it becomes hurtful unto *Man* is *sin*, so saith the *Apostle*, *The sting of death is sin*. Now this *String* reacheth not only to the *Body*, but to the *Soul* also ; as to the *Body*, it takes away all those *Contentments* and *Comforts* wherewith it was here *Refreshed* and *Delighted* ; *Death* rends the *Husband* from the *Wife*, and the *Wife* from the *Husband* ; it divides *Children* from their *Parents*, and *Parents* from their *Children* ; *death* spoils us of whatsoever is *desirable* in this *life*, *strips* a *Man* of all and turns him naked out of the *World* ; But this is not all, *death* not only be-
reaves us of all that is *good* here, but it brings many *Evils* along with it ; *Sickness*, *pains* on the *Body*, *Grief* and *Anguish* upon the *Mind* and *Spirit* : It is a *terrible Enemy* to *wrestle* and *contend* withal, it will make a *Man* *sweat* and *bleed*, no *Man* can *Encounter* with *death*, but he shall feel *great Anxiety* and *Vexation* both of *Body* and *Mind*, unless he have *strength* from above to enable him to go through the *Contest*. *Death* in its own *Nature* is so *ferocious* an *Enemy* unto *Sinners*, that it will not *cease* till it hath *pulled* the *Body* down into the *Grave*, and *dragg'd* the *Soul* into the *Presence* of *God*, and from his *Tribunal* into the *Torments* of *Eternal Fire* ; where the *first death* terminates in the *second death*, and the *Torments* exceed not only all our *Expressions*, but all our *Apprehensions* also : where *death* that is now such a *dreadful Enemy*, would there be counted an *unspeakable Mercy*, for there they shall seek *death*, but shall not be able to find it. But more particularly the *Enmity* of *death* appears in these particulars.

First, *The Fears* of *death* do much abate our *desires* after the *Enjoyment* of *God* in *Heaven*. It

is true, every Believer is one that loves God above all, and looks upon Heaven as that which shall be his dwelling place for ever, and accordingly sincerely desires and longs after it; and in his daily Conversation walks with his Face thitherwards: but when he sees death stands in the way between him and Heaven, and that there is no coming for him to that place of Bliss, but he must pass through that dark Valley; this puts him to a stand, and makes his desires weak and low. The best Christians I believe have sometimes felt such workings as these within their Souls; for tho' the Regenerate part discovering it self in the work of Sanctified Affections, would be soaring upwards towards God and Heaven, in whose presence the Soul would fain be: but seeing death standing in its way, how are the desires of such a Holy Soul kept down by the fears of it, and he turned back as one that was afraid to come into his Father's presence. Where is the Christian the Eye of whose Faith is so steadily fixed upon Christ in Heaven, whose Soul is sometimes ready to cry out, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better; yet withal, when he sees the rude hand of death stretched out to undress him, and that there is no coming unto Jesus Christ for him, but by first suffering a Dissolution, and laying down of his Earthly Tabernacle in the Grave: though he would fain be with Christ; that he might enjoy him whom his Soul loveth; yet seeing this dismal Enemy death in the way, doth not shrink back and cry out, O I dare not venture; O what a dreadful Enemy is this, and what dreadful Enmity doth it put forth in the obstructing our desires, though after God and Heaven; causing us to run from God as it were at that time, when we truly and dearly love him. Happy Souls are they, in whom Faith and Love work so powerfully as to conquer and overcome these fears.

Secondly,

Secondly, If death as an enemy prevails so as to abate our desires after the Enjoyment of God in Heaven, it will be apt to endanger our falling in love with this present World, and so make us miserable, by causing us to take up with the men of this World, who have their Portion in this Life. Take a Christian whose desires after Heaven are weak though true, because blunted by the apprehensions of some frightful difficulties that must be gone through for the attaining of it; how apt is such a one to be tempted to think that it is best for him to take up with those delightful pleasures that may be had here, without such dangerous adventures? but now if that which darkens the Blessed Vision of Heaven, and our unspeakable Happiness in the fruition of God there, and which also deadens our desires after this blessedness be once removed, which usually is the dreadful apprehensions of death; with what ease can such a Soul with a Holy Scorn and Contempt despise all the trifling Vanities of this World, as things not worthy to be regarded?

Thirdly, The Enmity of Death manifests it self in obstructing a Christians endeavours towards Heaven. A discouraged disconsolate Soul moves but slowly, be it towards Earth or Heaven. Difficulties that should stir up greater diligence, usually are great discouragements unto our endeavours, and we are apt to cry out with Solomon's Sluggard, There is a Lion in the way, and therefore it is, that the hands of the Sloathful refuse to labour. And so it is with us in Spirituals, difficulties soon discourage and hinder our endeavours; whereas they should be a whet to Industry. The Kingdom of Heaven says our Lord, suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. But alas, in many Christians the fears of death are so strong that they keep them

in *Bondage* all their *Days*. But now were *Death* removed out of our way; could *Christians* be cloathed upon with their *House* which is from *Heaven*, without laying down the *earthly Tabernacles* of their *Bodies* in the *Grave*; were there no such thing as *dying* to make way for our *Entrance* into *Heaven*, how delightful would the *Thoughts* of *Heaven* be to us? we should not then run with *Patience*, but with *Chearfulness* the *Race* that is set before us; we should no longer need *Motives* to quicken us in our way to *Heaven*; but so earnest and vehement would our *desires* and *longings* be after it, that nothing could stop the eager pursuits of our *Souls* for the obtaining of it. How delightfully should we pray, *Lord let thy Kingdom of Glory come*? Our *Meditations* thereof would so draw forth our *Affections*, and ravish our *Souls* in the delightful fore-thoughts of it, that we should think nothing hard to part with for the attaining of it. But that now which abates our *Desires* after *Heaven*, must needs hinder our diligent *Endeavours* in the use of *Means* for the obtaining of it.

Now as *Death* is an *Enemy*, so it is the last *Enemy*, but yet withal it is an *Enemy* that shall be destroyed; so the *Apostle* tells us, *1 Cor. 15. and 16.* Now the last *Enemy* that shall be destroyed is *Death*.

But how or by whom is this last *Enemy* *Death* destroyed and overcome.

I answer, Not by our selves; for *Death* seems rather to have destroyed us than we it, when it brings the *Body* down into the *Grave*, and turns it into *Corruption* and *Rottenness*. But this last *Enemy* is destroyed by our victorious *Redeemer* the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the *Captain* of our *Salvation*; he it
is

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is who by the *Merit* of his *Death* hath overcome *Death*; and of a *dead'y Enemy*, hath made it become a most comfortable *Friend* to all that believe in him.

Now for this we must know *Christ* hath not delivered us from our *Obligation* unto *Death*; for since the *Fall* of *Man*, *Death* is become necessary for a *Christian*, being the only way appointed by *God* for our *Entrance* into *Heaven*; and therefore we see that *Believers* die as well as *Unbelievers*. Neither hath *Christ* delivered us from *Sickness* and *Distempers*, the usual *Fore-runners* of *Death*. *David* complains, *Psal.* 38. *My Loins are filled with a loathsome Disease; there is no soundness in me because of thine Anger, neither is there any rest in my Bones because of my Sin.* But now in these *Respects* *Christ* hath overcome *Death* for *Believers*.

First, He hath taken away the *Sting* of *Death*. This *Captain* of our *Salvation* upon the *Cross*, as in an open *Field* and *pitch'd Battel*, did spoil *Principalities* and *Powers*, *Col.* 2. 15. Now one of these *Powers* armed against us was *Death*, and the *Weapon* with which *Death* fights against us is *Sin*: Our *Lord Jesus Christ* now took away our *Sins* upon the *Cross*, and so spoil'd *Death* of his *Power*. For having spoiled *Principalities* and *Powers*, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on his *Cross*. *Death* once struck the *Lord* of *Life* and *Glory* with its *Sting*, and by striking him lost its *Sting* in his blessed *Side*; so that ever since all that are in *Christ*, do or may insult over *Death*, as being conquer'd and overcome for them; so speaks the *Apostle*, *1 Cor.* 15. and 55, 57. *O Death where is thy Sting, O Grave where is thy Victory. The Sting of Death is Sin, says he, and the Strength of Sin is the Law: But thanks be to God, who*
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hath

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hath given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Secondly, *Christ delivers Believers from the fears of Death.* Heb. 2. 14, 15. *Forasmuch then as the Children were Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through Death he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is the Devil: But is this all? No, the Apostle adds another end; and that is, that he might deliver them who through fear of Death were all their life-time subject unto Bondage.* Now that which makes an Enemy to be feared is his Strength, his deadly Weapons: Christ now by dying on the Cross took away the Weapons of Death, its Sting whereby it hath Power to hurt, and that is Sin. Now Death being disarmed, Christians are free'd from the Fears of it. It is true Men may sometimes fear a naked Enemy; but there is no real Cause for it, seeing he cannot hurt them. And so the People of God sometimes may exceed in their Fears of Death, but they have no just Cause; neither would they be so afraid of Death, if they were strong in the Faith of Jesus Christ, who hath disarmed Death for them.

Thirdly, *Christ delivers his People from the Curse of Death.* In it self Death is a Curse, the Punishment of Man's Sin, the Expression of God's Wrath, the Execution of the Law, and the dreadful Sentence pronounced against Man upon his Apostacy from God. In the day thou eatest thereof, says God, thou shalt die the Death. But all that die under the stroke of Death, do not die under the Curse of it; all deserve it indeed, but to some the Nature of it is changed; thorough him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, they that believe shall
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never die: A Voice from Heaven hath pronounced them *blessed* that die in the Lord, Rev. 14. 13. The Nature of Death is changed to them that are in Christ, such do but sleep. To die to a Saint is no more than to undress and go to Bed: Let what will become of Dives, our Friend Lazarus sleepeth, John 11. 12. The Just by Death enter into Peace, they rest in their Beds, and are taken from the Evil to come. Death to the wicked is like a Malefactor's putting off his Cloths, that he may be scourged according to Law: So Death uncloathes the wicked, that by the Wrath of God they may be tormented for ever. But now to the godly Man Death is but like a Child's putting off an Old Garment, that he may put on a new one: So Death uncloathes the Godly of the Rags of their Mortality, that they may be cloathed with an incorruptible Garment that shall never fade or change, but keep its beautiful Lustre and Glory for ever.

Fourthly, *Christ delivers his People from the Dominion of Death.* It is true when Death hath laid their Bodies down in the Grave, it seems to have Dominion over them; but it is but for a while, for our Lord Jesus hath taken away this seeming Dominion of Death, by the Merit of his own Death, and hath declared his Victory over it, and our deliverance from it, by raising up his own Body from the Grave. Christ by his Death did meritoriously conquer Death for Believers, but he did not actually conquer it till his Resurrection, but then he did; the Day of his Resurrection was the Day wherein Grace did triumph thorough Christ towards believing Souls; for on that Day Christ did openly shew to Heaven, to Hell, to Earth, that Death was not only conquerable by Believers, but that it was actually conquered for them thorough him. Blessed Souls

in Heaven believe it to their everlasting Consolation, and are thereby fully confirmed in the Resurrection of their own Bodies, because their Head is already risen for them. The damned in Hell have the Knowledge of it to their greater Torment, because they now know their sinful Bodies shall be raised to suffer for ever with their Souls in that Place of Torment, and therefore they believe and tremble. The Saints on Earth also know it, and therefore they rejoice in the believing Expectations of it; being assured that as the Bonds of Death were loosed, by which Christ was held in the Grave for the space of Three Days, but could not possibly be held by them any longer; so neither shall it be possible for Believers always to be held under them. But there is a time coming, when all that are in their Graves shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, Joh. 5. 28. And if we believe, says the Apostle, that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, in 1 Thes. 4. and 14. for says the same Apostle, Christ is risen, and become the first Fruits of them that sleep, in 1 Cor. 15. 20. And as Christ being raised from the Dead dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him. So the time will not be long before Believers shall also be raised from the Dead, and shall die no more; for there shall then be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain; no more Diseases, or Fears of Death, or the Grave; for behold all former things are passed away, and all things are become new, Rev. 21. 45.

But though Christ hath overcome Death, yet is there still a Fear of it in most: And indeed Death is an Object of Fear; neither is all Fear of Death to be condemned as sinful. Now for the better understanding of this, that Death is an Object of Fear, and

and when it may be *lawful* to fear *Death*, and when the *Fear* of it is *sinful*, I shall consider *Man* in a *threefold* Respect. As he is a *meer Man*, as he is a *sinful Man*, and as he is a *true Believer*.

First, I shall consider *Man* as he is a *meer Man*, compounded of *Soul* and *Body*, and so the *Nature* of *Man* abhors *Death*; and if it were possible (as it is not) to find out a *Man* in the *World* that were free from all manner of *Sin*, yet would he fear *Death*, were he liable to it, because it is that which tends to his *Dissolution* and *Destruction*. Thus our *Lord Jesus Christ* himself, though he was perfectly *holy*, and free from all *Sin*, yet in this sense he feared *Death*; and therefore he prays, *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*. Thus now to fear *Death* as it is *evil* and *destructive* unto *Nature* is not *sinful* or *unlawful*.

Secondly, Consider *Man* as he is *sinful* and *unregenerate*, and so *Death* is an *Object* of *Fear*, and full of *Horror*: For to all such *Death* comes armed with *Power*, not only to make a *Separation* between *Soul* and *Body*, (for so *Death* rules over all,) but it comes to *kill* and to *destroy* *Soul* and *Body* for ever; for to such it is not *Death* alone, as it is to the *Godly*; but it is *Death* and *Hell* together. Rev. 6. 8. *And I looked and behold a pale Horse, and his Name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him*. It is no wonder if *Death* be dreadful and terrible unto such; but it is rather a wonder that such can take any rest in the night, or enjoy any quietness in the day, that under the *Fears* of *Death* they are not distracted. But here is the *Misery* of such, they are so afraid of *Death*, that they will not let the *Thoughts* of it come into their *Minds*, but do what they can to banish the *Thoughts* of

of that *evil day* far from them. But know, O foolish Sinner, though thou sleepest, and art secure in Sin, yet thy Death and thy Damnation slumbers not; for Death and Hell are riding on Horse-back, making haste towards thee, and will soon overtake thee, to thy eternal Ruine and Destruction; and then thou shalt know by sad Experience, that the Fears of the first Death, which now thou labourst to stifle, yea to drive away from thy Thoughts, were not so full of dread and horror, as the feeling of the Second Death will be for ever. Death therefore unto wicked Men is an Object to be feared, and the fear of Death in them is not only lawful but commendable, and that upon which their Thoughts should much dwell, because it is that which will prevent much Sin in them while they live, and may possibly render Death more comfortable to them when they come to die.

Thirdly, Consider Man as regenerate, and become a true Believer, yet so he may, and often doth fear death: For let a Man be never so much a Saint, yet he will be still a Man; and therefore as death will be death, so nature will still be nature; and therefore death as death will be abhorred. Neither is there any necessity that the fear of death should be wholly conquered and subdued in the Godly, so as that it should not be, because it may and often doth turn to their Benefit and Advantage; for hereby they are made to walk more humbly with God and more watchfully over themselves; for while they consider that they are poor, frail, dying Creatures, subject unto death continually, and that they must pass from thence unto Judgment, to give an Account of what they have done in the Body; by this means they are kept from falling into many Sins, that now would wound their Conscien-

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ces, and break their peace, and hereafter make their death more dark and uncomfortable. By this fear of death also the Godly are quickened in their preparations for Heaven and Eternity; for because death is so certain that it will come, and withal so uncertain when it will come, the Godly are hereby stirred up unto a speedy and diligent preparation for it, that so they may be ready for their departure whensoever God by death shall call them hence.

And death now is an Object of Fear in general, so are there Reasons why Christians fear death in particular, as,

First, Some are afraid of death because of the extremity of those pains which they must undergo, when they are dying, and because of the Corruption and rottenness which their Bodies must turn to when they are dead.

But admit what thou sayest, O Christian, should be true, that thy pains in dying should be great; yet hast thou not sinned, and thereby deserved that what thou fearest, thou mayest feel; let me tell thee, There is not the most Righteous man on Earth, but hath sinned, and the least sin merits more pains than any man in the first death ever yet endured: If therefore thy pains in dying should be great, it is just with God what thou sufferest, and it is of his mercy that thou sufferest no more; for there is no comparison between thy pains and thy sins, between what thou mayest suffer, and what thou deservest to suffer: let thy sickness be what it will, and thy pains as great as well thou canst imagine; they are no more, nay they are not so much as thou hast deserved: If God should deal with thee according to the demerit of thy sins, it is not the most smart and severest pains of a Temporal death that are ended by dying; but easeless and endless

Torments

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Torments in Hell to all Eternity that would be thy Portion. Fear not therefore, O living Christian, complain not, O dying Christian, though thy pains in death should be great, for it is but the punishment of thy sins, nay let me say to thee, O Christian be thankful and rejoyce, for it is the last punishment thou shalt ever endure for thy sins, either here or hereafter.

But further? Is it the corruption and rottenness that thy body must be subject to in the Grave, that terrifies and affrights thee?

Let me say this unto thee, It is no very great matter what becomes of thy Body when it is once dead, though it were burnt to Ashes at a Stake, tho' it rot in the Fields as Dung upon the Ground, tho' in the Bowels of the Earth it become a Feast for Worms, and turn to corruption and rottenness; this will then be of no more concern to thee, than if it had with the greatest Cost and Charge been Embalmed and Buried by thy dearest Friends. The State of death knows nor feels no difference between the one and the other: And what if thy Body lies in the Grave for a while, it will not there be miserable, for it feels no pain, but rests quietly in its Bed, sweetly sleeping away time until the Morning of the Resurrection, when thou shalt awake out of the Dust again, and shalt die no more. And in the meantime thy Soul, [if thou art a true Believer, for unto such only there is Peace and Comfort in death] upon its departure out of the Body is advanced unto unspeakable Happiness in Heaven, among the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, in the Eternal Enjoyment of the infinitely blessed God, the Fountain of Light and Life; where thou shalt have as much Delight and Satisfaction as thou canst possibly contain, and more than now thou canst conceive: And why then art thou so affrighted

with

with the fears of Death, when this is all the hurt it can do thee?

O but Death is that which will take me from all my Friends and Relations, and deprive me of all that Comfort and Delight that here I enjoy in their sweet Society. To this I Answer, Suppose it be so that by Death thou art taken from a dear Yoke-fellow that is now the Delight of thine Eyes; suppose thou lovest all thy Friends and Kindred in the Flesh, whom thou lovest even as thy own Soul, not knowing certainly whether ever thou shalt see them, or at least so as to know them any more again for ever: If this be all thy trouble, how easily can God make it up unto thee: Alas, when Death hath once opened thine Eyes, and let thee see what blessed Society thou shalt enjoy in Heaven, thou wilt not, thou canst not be troubled for what thou hast left behind thee here: when thou art come to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the City of the Living God, to an innumerable company of Angels, to the General Assembly of the first born, to God the Judge of all, to the Spirits of Just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and where the blood of Sprinkling speaks better things than the blood of Abel: will it then grieve thee that thou hast left thy Friends and Relations on Earth? Why this is the State thou expectest, this is the Company thou hopest to enjoy hereafter; why then let the believing joyful expectations of this Association, bear up thy Soul under thy Fears by Death of losing thy Friends and Relations here.

But thou mayest say possibly they may want me when I am dead and gone, though I want not them; whilst I am with them, I see their wants and take care to supply them, and when they are going into any evil or sinful way, I Counsel them, I Reprove them, and I pray for them and endeavour to instruct

struct them in the fear of the Lord. But when I am gone, I know not who will do any of these things for them, and what then will become of them?

To this I Answer, canst thou say in good earnest that this is *thy strait*, that therefore thou desirest to live, that thou mayest be a means if God saw it good to further and promote their Souls Happiness: why then let me say this to thee, is it not a *time of health* with thee now, doth God lend thee the sweetness of such *Relations* and *Friends*, shew that thou lovest them indeed by taking hold of the *present opportunities* thou now hast to *Admonish* to *Reprove*, and to *Correct*, so far as it is thy place: Oh double and treble thy diligence in all *Respects* wherein thou mayest be *advantageous* to their Souls; multiply thy *Prayers* and *Tears*, thy *Sighs* and *Groans* unto God; follow him *Night* and *Day*, and give him no rest until thou hast some good ground to hope that God is not only thy God, but the God of thy *Friends* and *Relations* also; and when thou hast done thy utmost, and God by *Death* calls thee away hence, so that thou canst do no more, quietly resign up thy Soul into his hands, and commit them to the care and kindness of thy God, who is the Great and Universal Father, that takes care of all his Creatures, but is by special Relation a Father to them that fear and serve him.

But may some poor Soul say, when I come to die, the change that I must pass through by death, is so strange and so amazing, that I know not how I shall be able to bear it, death will both change my place and company: here I converse with *Friends* and *Relations* and *Acquaintance*, whom I well know, because I have lived so long among them; but when I go hence, O what a strange place and company shall I then see, such as I never saw in all my life, full of dazling and astonishing Brightness and Glory, the thoughts

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thoughts whereof may justly fill my Soul with fear and amazement.

To this I Answer, art thou a *Christian* indeed, and dost thou talk after this manner as if thou wert a *Stranger to God, to Christ, to Heaven, and the Happiness of Glorified Saints* there; whom is it thou callest *Father* every time thou *Prayest*? is it not the *God of Heaven*? What dost thou make of *Jesus Christ* thy *Professed Lord and Saviour*, whose love to thee was so great that he would manifest it in no other way, than that by which he might most endear himself unto thee, and most strongly engage thy Love and Affections unto him, and that was by laying down his Life and shedding of his Blood, a *Ransom* for thy Soul, and a propitiation for thy Sins, whom thou professest also to believe that he is *Ascended up into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God* presenting his Blood and Sufferings before the *Throne of the Majesty on high*; that both thy self and thy Services that are *Impure and Imperfect in themselves*, may yet be accepted through him: Is it not through his *Righteousness* alone, that thou hopest for *Justification* unto Life and Happiness, and through his *Strength* that thou art enabled to perform all thy Duties, and yet dost thou not know him; what a strange thing is this? But alas sayest thou, it is very little that I know of him, never did I see him in all my days. But what if thou hast not beheld him with thy *Bodily Eyes*; yet canst thou not say with the *Apostle*, whom having not seen, yet thou hast and dost believe in him; and sometimes, it may be so as to rejoyce with that Joy that is unspeakable and full of Glory; and tho' thou hast not known him after the *Flesh*, yet thou hast known him after the *Spirit*, though thou hast known him but a little, and what thou dost see and know of

of him *Spiritually*, is but through a *Glass darkly*; yet be not *dejected*, fear not, for he *knows thee perfectly*, and hath *separated thee* and set thee apart for himself from *Eternity*, and hath *effectually called thee in time*, *Justified thee by his Grace*; yea, he *knows thee by Name*, and now in the *approach of Death*, he is coming to *take thee to himself*, where thou shalt *see him as he is*, and *know him as thou art known of him*. And as for those *Glorious Creatures*, the *Angels and Saints in Heaven*, methinks it should even *Ravish thee* to think how those *Noble and Excellent Creatures* will *flock about thee* and *bid thee welcome into Heaven* as one *greatly beloved of the Lord*, saying unto thee, not as the *Angel* once said unto the two *Mary's*, *Mat. 28. come see the place where the Lord lay*, but come see the *Throne* where thy *Lord* sits in all his *Majesty and Glory*.

But may some say, I may well be afraid to die, because it is that which puts an end to my life and being here: and who can without fear look upon himself, and see his *Body withering and decaying* and not be troubled at it? is not *Death the great Dread and Terror of the World*? *Job* therefore calls it, *The King of Terrors*. O how doth the *Expectations of Death* appale the *Faces*, weaken the *Hands*, shake the *Hearts*, imbitter the *Pleasures*, and damp and cool the *Spirits*, even of the *Mighty ones of the Earth*! Should *God* say unto many, that they should set their *Houses in Order*, for they shall die and not live; should they see a *Tekel*, written upon their *Walls*, their days are finished, this night shall their *Souls* be taken from them; what sad *Lamentations* would most *Men* make? *Life*, O how sweet is it to them, all that they have would they give for their *Lives*; doth not *Nature* it self teach us to seek the *Preservation of our Beings*, and abhors whatever tends to its *Dissolution* as death doth?

To

To this I Answer, because of this abhorrency of Death, which is implanted in the Nature of all Men living, there may be even in the best of God's People a fear of Death and an unwillingness to die. Our Lord himself, who was without Sin, discovers something of this, who though to shew his great willingness and readiness to die for Sinners, said, I have a Baptism to be Baptized withal, which was the Baptism of his Blood, and how am I straitned till it be accomplished; thinking long for the coming of the day of his Death, whereby the work of our Redemption was in a great measure to be accomplished; yet when Death came to him, see how his pure and innocent Nature was put to it, when he cry'd out, Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: It is true in his Case there was more than Death in it, there was wrath, there was a curse, there was all the Sins of the World wrung into that Cup to mingle him a bitter draught; but this was also something of it; for there was Death in the Cup. It will therefore be the Wisdom of Christians, to whatever measure of confidence and assurance they may have attained, so as upon good grounds to have overcome the fears of Death, and to look upon their dying day as the most joyful day in their lives; yea, though in this confidence their Hearts may sometimes pant after the coming of that day, and they ready to cry out, make haste my beloved, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; yet will it be your wisdom to buckle on all your Armour, to get all your Evidences and Experiences ready, for the conflict of that day and hour may be such as that you may stand in need of your utmost Preparations; for you know not how the Flesh may shrink in the day of Trial. But if it should be so; yet be not discouraged, O Christian, for possibly this very instance of our Lord, may be left upon Record for this very end, to comfort his People when they

they shall be overtaken with the same *fears* and *troubles*.

And as for the *sweetness* of this present *Life*, the losing whereof makes thee to *fear Death*, let me ask thee this *Question*, Who art thou that art so *fond* of this *present Life*? Art thou a *Christian* indeed and in truth; or dost thou only make a *profession* of *Religion*, without the *life* and *power* of *Godliness*? If thou art only an *outward professor*, I wonder not that thou shouldst set so high a *price* and *value* upon *life*, and art so unwilling to *part* with it, because all thy *happiness* is *terminated* in things that are *enjoyed* on this *side Death* and the *Grave*; for as for those *great* and *glorious things*, that *Eye* hath not *seen*, nor *Ear* heard, nor can *possibly* enter into the *Heart* of *Man* to *conceive*, that *God* hath prepared for them that *love* him; and which are to be *enjoyed* beyond *time* in *Eternity*, thou hast no *lot* or *portion* in those *matters*: What wonder therefore, if thou *mourn* and *sigh* even to the breaking of thy *Loyns*, when *Death* comes to put an end to thy *Life*; for then it separates between thee and thy *happiness* for ever. But if thou art one that truly *fearest* *God*, thou needst not be so foolishly *fond* of this *Life*; for what is there in it that should make thee doat upon it; Is it not a *Life* full of *cares* and *troubles*? Have not thy *Sins* made it so? The *Wise Man* tells us, that all that is in this *Life*, that can be outwardly *enjoyed*, is nothing but *Vanity* and *vexation* of *Spirit*; Hast thou not by *experience* found it so? Thou shouldst therefore with *Holy Job* bless *God*, not only for *giving* of *Life*, but for *taking* of it away also; *God* gave it thee for a *time*, and but for a short time too; and if thou wert so *wise* as thou shouldst be, thou oughtest to count it thy *felicity* that it is so short; for it is a *Life* of *sorrow*, and who will complain because his *sorrows* are so short? It may be thou

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thou hast met with some *pleasures* here that *gratifie* thy *sense* ; but are they comparable to what thy *Soul* hath tasted in the *enjoyment* of *God*, unto which *God* by *Death* is calling thee to the *enjoyment* of with himself in *Heaven* to all *Eternity* ? Darest thou say that *Earth* is like *Heaven* ? Is *Christ* in those dark and *dim discoveries* he makes of himself in the *Gospel*, like to *Christ* in the *full and open manifestations* of himself in all his *Glory* in *Heaven* ? Canst thou say thy *Soul* is so like him in *Wisdom*, *Holiness*, *Joy*, and *Peace* here, as it will be above, when it comes to be enrolled among the *Spirits* of *just Men made perfect* ? If thou wilt be in love with *Life*, be in love with *Eternal Life* ; and henceforth *fear* not to *die* at *God's* call ; for the *obedience* that thou owest unto *God* binds thee, and the *gain* that *Death* will bring should both *invite* and *encourage* thee. Though *Death* ends this *Life* it begins another ; and though thou may'st rot under ground in one part of thee, yet it is in thy vilest part, thy *Body* ; and even that will spring up and flourish again shortly : And in the mean time, thy *Soul*, thy *better part*, shall live a more *noble* and *excellent* life. Think well therefore of *Death* ; for as it ends thy *Life*, so it ends thy *Sin* and thy *sufferings* also.

In these particular Instances, O *Christian*, thou feelst how little *cause* there is for thee to be *afraid* of *Death*. I shall now in the next place endeavour to discover how *unfit* and *uncomely* a thing it is for *Christians* to *fear Death* ; and for this consider,

First, A *Christians* *fearing of Death*, brings a *reproach* upon *Religion*, as if there were not that in *Christianity*, that could lift up a *Soul* above the *fears of Death*. For a *Papist* that professeth no *Man* can in an ordinary way be *assured* that he shall

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go to *Heaven* when he dies to tremble at the *thoughts* of *Death*, this is no great matter, it is but to act according to what his *Religion* teacheth him; but for one that professeth the knowledge and assurance of *Salvation* and a *future happy State*, to stand amazed at *death*, the way and passage through which God hath appointed we must enter into *Heaven*, where this *happiness* is to be enjoyed, shews, if not a *want* of *Faith*; yet at least a *great weakness* of *Faith*, and gives occasion to those that speak *evil* of the good *ways* of *God*, to reflect disgracefully upon *Religion*.

Secondly, *To live in fear of Death, is that State of Bondage and Slavery which wicked Men are under, and from which Jesus Christ came to deliver his People*: And therefore for a *Believer* to live dejectedly under the fears of *Death* is a very uncomely thing. Indeed the fears of *wicked Men* are so great, that they cannot think of *Death* without horreur; and when they come to *die* they are compelled to it, for of all things in the *World* they dread *Death* most; and could they but be assured that they shall live here always, they would desire no other *Heaven*. *Fearfulness* and *amazement* under the apprehensions of *Death* is the proper State of *wicked Men*, that *Slavery* and *Bondage* unto which they are always subject; for upon good grounds they can have no hopes in *Death*; but are full of fearful expectations of *Wrath* and fiery *Indignation* that shall Torment them for ever. But now for true *Believers*, God hath made your state and condition very unlike unto theirs, as to the issues of *Death*, because you have good hopes of *Eternal Life* even in *Death*; so says the *Wise Man*, *Prov. 14. 32.* The *Righteous* hath hope in his *Death*. Now since there is so great an unlikeness between you and them both in *Death* and

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and after Death, let there not be a likeness between you and them as to your fears of Death; let a Felix tremble at the hearing of Death and Judgment; but let not the Godly hang down their Heads, but lift them up with joy and rejoicing, because the day of their Redemption draweth nigh.

Thirdly, Consider this, to be afraid of Death, is to fear that which is but the Shadow and semblance of Death: For to speak strictly, a state of Sin, and separation of the Soul from God for Sin, this is Death properly; but the separation of the Soul from the Body only, is but the Shadow of Death. But O how seldom is it to see Men trembling because of a spiritual Death, because they are dead in trespasses and sins, though this be infinitely more dreadful than any temporal Death can be? And therefore to shew how full of Woe and Misery this Death is, it is called Damnation; which is the extremity of all Misery: This is that now to which this spiritual Death tends, and in which it will terminate. Hence therefore Wicked Men are said to be condemned already, and the wrath of God abides upon them, and that they shall have their Portion in that Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death: This shall as certainly be their Portion as if they were there already. Therefore, O Christian, if thou wilt fear Death, fear not that which is the shadow and the appearance of it, but fear that which is Death indeed; fear Sin, that is the cause both of the first and of the second Death also; for if thou art spiritually alive, and raised from the Death of Sin, as all true Believers are, how uncomely a thing is it for thee to fear the Shadow, the appearance of an evil which cannot hurt thee, when thou art delivered from the evil it self?

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Fourthly, Consider, for a Christian to fear that which is both common and certain, is an uncomely and unsuitable thing. Afflictions in general are the common lot of all God's People in this World; but Death is that which is more common, because it is that which befalls all both good and bad; from other outward Afflictions there is a possibility that some may be free; or if they befall them, they may be delivered from under them again; but no Man can escape Death. What Man is he that liveth, saith the Psalmist, and shall not see Death? shall he deliver his Soul from the hand of the Grave? No, he cannot. Now God hath in Mercy made that to be most common, which is most grievous and afflictive, that he might thereby abate the terrour of it to us; and for any one to strive against that which no Man can avoid or shun, argues that Man to be guilty of great folly. It is therefore very unbecoming thee, O Christian, to fear Death, which is the common way of all Flesh; yea, the way by which all the People of God enter into Heaven and Happiness.

But to proceed a little farther in this subject, I shall in the next place endeavour to discover, that the fears of Death may not only be overcome for a time, but that it is possible for a Christian to live without them, or above them; which though it be a high attainment, yet is it that to which Grace may reach, and that which many of the People of God do daily experience the comfort of.

Now by Christians living without the fear of Death, I mean a holy quietation and satisfaction of Soul, as to his future State of Happiness founded upon the knowledge of his Interest in Christ, who hath overcome Death for all Believers, whereby the thoughts of its approach, doth neither distract nor disquiet his Mind, so as to bereave him of that Peace and Tranquility of Soul that he enjoys in his Hopes and Expectations of

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of Heaven and Glory; but that he can with a holy Contentation and Satisfaction, resign up his Soul unto God, whensoever he calls for it.

Now that such a State as this is attainable, I need say no more, than that this was one of the ends for which Christ died, that by Death he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who by reason of the fear of Death, were all their life-times subject unto Bondage. So that we being delivered out of the hands of all our spiritual Enemies, (whereof Death is one,) we might serve him without fear in Holiness and Righteousness all the days of our lives. In this Heavenly frame was Holy David, when he said, though he walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death he would fear no evil: And so was St. Paul, when he tells us, he was persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, should be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No wonder therefore that he could say, I desire to be dissolved (though it was by Death) that he might be with Christ. Thus to live above the fears of Death, will cost much pains with our own Hearts, great diligence and circumspection over our selves in all our thoughts, words, and ways; much watchfulness against all Sin and Temptations; for if we be remiss, and through carelessness, much more through presumption, we fall into Sin, or neglect Duty, we shall soon be brought into Bondage and Slavery by the fears of Death.

If therefore, O Christian, thou art one, who hast overcome the fears of Death, and canst live above them, thou may'st then die with courage, and leave this World, (though Death carry thee out of it,) with joy and rejoicing. And that thou may'st be able

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to do so, let me briefly lay down two or three Directions.

First, *Have a great care of blotting thy Evidences for Heaven.* Darknes is an uncomfortable thing: And when *Christians* have been tampering with the works of *Darkness*, I mean some known *Sins* blotting their *Evidences*, which should discover their *Title to Heaven*, so that they cannot read them; what wonder is it while they are thus in the dark, that they are afraid to leave *Earth*, though it be to go to *Heaven*, because they know it not, for which they may thank themselves. God would not only have his *People* go to *Heaven* certainly, but joyfully; and therefore he hath made ample provisions for their *Peace* and comfort, both in *Life* and *Death*; so that they may not only have good hope but strong consolation through *Grace*; yea, may with a holy exultation of *Soul*, cry out, *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to Triumph in Christ.* But now, if when God hath spoken *Peace*, they will turn again unto folly, by venturing upon *Sin*, they hereby create their own sorrows. *Fear* and *Consternation* of *Soul*, under the apprehensions of *Death*, come from themselves, they are their own *Tormenters*, and the *hinderers* and *disturbers* of their own *Peace* and *Joy*. And now if instead of being able to read their *Evidences* for *Heaven*, which should comfort them, they can only make wounding reflections upon their *Sins* that have blotted those *Evidences*, so that they walk in *darkness*, and the fears of *Death* continually afflict their *Souls*, they must thank themselves; for where there is the apprehensions of guilt lying upon any *Soul* unpardoned, there the thoughts of death will be terrible. This made *David*, when in his own apprehensions he was drawing nigh to the *Grave*, beg so importunately of God, that he would spare him

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him a little longer, that he might recover his strength before he should go away from hence and be seen no more. If therefore when you come to die, you would leave this *World* cheerfully, you must live in the *World* conscienciously. Exercise your selves in all things to keep Consciences void of offence towards God and towards all Men. Take heed of those black Fiends, thy Sins, which will fright thy Soul in the dark night of death. If thy Conscience be kept clean, thy Evidences for Heaven will be clear, and the thoughts of death comfortable. Many by venturing upon Sin, wound their Souls; and when death approaches, O then they start back and fain would they be spared a little longer. If Conscience be raw with the guilt of any one Sin, a very light affliction (much more death) will make a Man sick and sting, and very unwilling to bear it; but where the Spirit is found, and the guilt of Sin taken off from the Conscience by the love of Christ, death it self will be embraced with courage and joy.

Secondly, *Deadens your Hearts and Affections to the World and all the comforts thereof.* The inordinate love of worldly enjoyments, and the imperfect love of God makes Men afraid to die. He whose Heart and Affections sit loose to the *World*, a small matter will make him willing to leave it; but where the Heart is fastned to it in love and affection, there will be no parting from it, without much reluctancy. He that hath laid up his Heart in Heaven, can comfortably think of laying down his Body in the Grave. Prize therefore Heavenly things above Earthly. Place your Happiness in spiritual things; count them not only your Food, but your Feast; yea, make them your recreation. Were Heaven and Heavenly things, the continual solace and delight of our Souls, with what joy and rejoicing should we leave Earth to go to Heaven.

Thirdly, *Familiarize the Thoughts of Death unto your Souls by frequent Meditation.* Dost thou dread this *King of Terrours*? give not way to thy *Fears*; but bring *Death* often into thy thoughts; there is no such hurt in it as thou imaginest, nothing that should terrifie a *Christian*. Consider a little, what it is that *Death* can do against thee, and what it is *Death* shall do for thee; and then tell me if thou hast any cause to *fear* it; nay, tell me what cause thou hast to *rejoice* in it: What is it *death* can do against thee? It may part thee and the *World*, thee and thy *Friends*; yea, it will part between thy *Soul* and thy *Body*, bringing it down into the dust for a time, to become a *Feast* for *Worms*; and this is the worst that *Death* can do against a *Believer*. But then consider withal what *Death* shall do for thee, why it shall bring thee to a *Happiness* so great in the enjoyment of *God*, as is unutterable for thee to express, and unconceivable for thee to imagine; and this not for a time, but for ever; this *death* shall do for thee, O *Christian*; and surely, if thou believest these things with a lively active *Faith*, thou canst not any longer set *death* at a distance from thee, as an *Enemy* that thou art afraid of; but converse with it familiarly as a *Friend*; yea, as thy best *Friend*, next unto *Jesus Christ*. *Job* was thus familiar with *death*, *Job* 17. 14. *I have said unto Corruption thou art my Father, and to the Worms ye are my Mother, and Sister, and Brother.* Accustom thy self therefore, O *Christian*, unto the thoughts of *death*, and often think what a happy change thou shalt thereby undergo, even an entrance into *Heaven* and *Glory*: And then though the thoughts of *death* be full of *horror* unto others; yet such thoughts unto thee, will not only be profitable but exceeding delightful.

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Fourthly, *If you would die with Courage and Joy, then often meditate upon the Death of Christ.* It is a common Argument and in the Mouths of most Persons, that *all must die* ; all that have lived before us have gone this way : But who is there that takes *courage* to follow others into the *Grave*, because multitudes are gone thither before them ? No, it is but a poor encouragement to die, because other Men like our selves have died before us. But when a *Christian* shall believingly remember and consider, that *Jesus Christ* died and was laid in the *Grave*, not only before us, but for us ; and that he hath there conquered the King of *Terrours*, even upon his own ground ; this makes a *Believer* die with a *bold courage*, and descend into the *Grave* with an *undaunted boldness*. But because *Christians* so seldom meditate on the *Death of Christ*, therefore are they so afraid of their own *death*. He that hath often conversed with *death*, in the *Meditation* of the *death of Christ*, (as *Believers* do or should do,) cannot be afraid to *die*, if he knows what the *death of Christ* means which he hath meditated upon. Savingly to know that *Christ* is gone before us in *death*, is not only enough to make us cheerful, but to make us alive in *death*. He that by *Faith* contemplates that *Christ* is gone before him by *dying*, and that in *dying* he *died* for him ; and that he also is *alive*, and *lives* for him ; with what *abundant joy* and *consolation*, may he depart out of this *World*.

C H A P. VI.

Objections against Death, and Unwillingness to die answered. Consolations against the Fear of Death in general. Comforts against the Death of Friends and Relations in particular. The Saints great Gain by Death, propounded as a Motive and Encouragement unto Christians against the Fears of it.

THough it be the Duty of Christians to die willingly, yea with Courage and Joy to commit their Souls into the hands of God; yet are there many, who cannot overcome their fears of death, so as to be willing to die; and the Reasons thereof are such as these.

First, say some, *We could be content to die, had we but attained unto sixty or seventy years as some Men do; but alas, we are young, in the prime of our years, and in the strength of our Days: The Sun of our Life hath not been long up; and must it go back, and decline, yea and set also already? We are willing to die hereafter; but O that God would spare us a little longer.*

To this, I answer, these are foolish pityings of thy self: For if it please the Great God, in whose Hands thy life is, thy breath, and all thy ways, that thou must die young, hast thou any Injustice to charge him withal? What wrong hath he done thee in cutting short the thread of thy life? Thou hast forfeited thy life into his Hands long since; and

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and if *sparing Mercy* hath continued the *Forfeiture*; and given thee a *space* and *time* of *Repentance*, though not so *long* as thou desirest; yet more than thou *deservest*, yea and more than he *owed* thee: Thou shouldst therefore rather be *thankful* for it, and with all *diligence improve* it, than *repine* that it is so *short*, or be *unwilling* to part with it so *soon*: For though *long life* may be a *Blessing*, yea is *promised* so; yet if thou art a *Believer*, a *short life* shall be no *Curse* unto thee. To a *pardoned Soul*, all things are *Blessings*, yea *Death* it self; for the *bitterness* of it is taken away. Righteous *Abel* though young *dies*, and *dies* by *Murder*; whilst wicked *Cain* the *Murderer* of him, *lives* some *hundreds* of *years* after. When *God* who is the great *Lord of Time*, and *measures* out to *every one* what *number of days* they shall *live*, hath *appointed* unto thee the *day and hour* of thy *departure*; though the *days* of thy *life* be but as a *span long*, compared with the *lives* of others; yet is it in *vain* to contend with *God*; thou may'st *trouble* thy self, and make thy *life* uncomfortable, but thou can'st not alter *God's Decrees*; for he is of *one Mind*, as *Job* speaks, and *who can turn him*? That is, none can; and therefore cheerfully *yeld up* thy self unto his *Will*.

But possibly thou wilt say, *I would live longer, that I might serve and honour God more.*

If thou art *sincere* in what thou sayest, it is well; but if *God* will take the *Will* for the *Deed*, and accept of what thou hast done already, and reward thee with the *eternal Enjoyment* of himself immediately, hast thou any *Cause* to complain? What if thou gettest to *Heaven* twenty, or thirty years before thy *Father* or *Brother*, or many other of thy *Acquaintance*, that are travelling with their *Faces Heaven-ward*, and have been so many years al-

ready? Will it grieve thee that thou art got to *Heaven* too soon, where if thou art a *Christian* thou always hast a desire to be? I assure thee thy *Friends* and *Relations*, though they may not *envy* thy *Happiness*; yet if they had but once *tasted* the *Sweetness* thereof, their *longings* after it would be so great, that they would *continually* cry out, *Oh Time hasten and flee away, that we may come to the full Enjoyment of our longed for Happiness.* Hath God cast thee, O *Christian*, upon a *Bed of Pain and Sorrow*, and is it likely to prove thy *Death-bed*? Are there such *Symptoms of thy departure*, that God seems to tell thee *plainly* thou shalt *die*, and not *live*? O do not *reply* and say, It is too soon yet, thou art too young to *die* and go to *Heaven*: What though God call thee to *Glory* and *Blessedness* sooner than thou expectedst, yet *shame* not thy self, *grieve* not others that behold thee; much more, *disparage* not the *Happiness* of *Heaven*, nor of that God who is to be *eternally* enjoyed there, by thy *unwillingness* to go thither?

Secondly, May some say, we shall have so many *Evils* to encounter with, that will create us so much *fear* and *trouble*, and withal so many *Pains* will befall us in a *dying hour*, that we cannot tell how to *think of Death*, we are so *affrighted* at it.

To this I answer: It is true a *Christian* cannot expect to *die* without *Assaults* of *Enemies*, nor without the *Pains* of *Death*; but yet a *Christian* need not *fear*, nor be *unwilling* to *die* for all this.

First, One *Discouragement* may be the *Apprehension* of the *guilt of Sin*, which they then *fear* will *stare* their *Consciences* in the *Face*; and how to *bear up* under it they know not. But know, O *Christian*, if *Sin* hath lost its *Throne* in thy *Soul*;

it

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if it hath no Interest in thy *Affections*, so that it is not embraced with any *Love* or *Delight*, it shall never *ruine* or *condemn* thee. For it is a certain Truth where *Sin* doth not *rule*, there *Sin* shall never *damn*. He that by the *Grace* and *Spirit* of *Christ* is enabled to *mortifie* his *Sins*, and all sinful *Affections* and *Inclinations* thereunto; and by a *penitential Conversion* of Soul, from *Sin* unto *God*, hath forsaken his *sinful ways*; all his former *Provocations*, though never so great, lose their *damning* Power: For where *Sin* is once in the Exercise of godly *Sorrow* confessed unto *God*, it is by him *graciously pardoned*. Nay the *Apostle* tells us, in *1 John* 1. 9. *If we confess our Sins, God is not only merciful and gracious, but he will be just and righteous to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* And what greater security can a *Christian* desire for his support, than the Truth and *Faithfulness* of that *God*, who is Truth it self and cannot lie?

Secondly, *There is another thing that may startle a Christian's Confidence, and make him unwilling to die; and that is the fears of the Assaults of Satan, who will do what he can, not only to hinder our future Happiness, but to interrupt our comfortable passage through Death.*

It is true the *Devil* will be very active in a dying hour. But be not discouraged; give not place to his *Temptations*: For where *Sin* is pardoned as it is to all *Believers*; What hath the *Devil* wherewith to shake a *Christian's Confidence*, or to undermine his *Hopes* and *Expectance*; but what is built upon *Lies* and *Falshood*. If therefore you will give Credit unto this *Father of Lies*, when he endeavours to weaken those certain *Assurances* the great *God* hath given you of his resolved *Designs* to save such

as you are; and so come to be *disturbed* and *confounded* in your Thoughts about your present and future *State*, you must *blame* your selves. Till therefore it can be *proved*, that *Sin* may be *repented* of and not *pardoned*; that *Sin* may be *pardoned*, and yet the *Soul* *perish* and undone; till God or *Christ* prove either *forgetful*, *unable*, or *false*, be not *dejected*. It is the great Comfort of a *Christian*, that the *Devil* hath no other *Arguments* to *disquiet* a *Believer* with in a *dying hour*, but what are bot-tom'd on these gross Absurdities. And though *Satan* may be furious in his last *Assaults*, yet, O *Chri-stian*, remember when thou art *walking* through the *Valley* of the *shadow* of *death*, thou *walkest* not alone: In that *dark* and *gloomy Valley*, God hath his *Rod* and his *Staff* in readiness for thy *Assistance* and *Encouragement*; and know further, O *belie-ving Soul*, that *Christ* our *compassionate High Priest*, knows what it is to *die*, and hath been ac-quainted with the *Subtilties* and *Fury* of the *Tem-pter*, by smart Experience, and his *sympathy* hath taught him *pity*; and because he is our *Head*, he will not *forget* his *Members* under their *afflicting Temptations* in that hour: For though he be in *Heaven*, he retains the same *Bowels* and *Affections* now in his *glorified State*, which he had here upon *Earth*; and doth continually improve his *Interces-sion* in *Heaven*, for the *benefit*, *security* and *relief* of his *afflicted People* in their greatest *dangers* and *Extremities*.

If any poor *Believers* shall here object the pains of *Death*, as being so great, and to their apprehen-sions insupportable; and therefore they are unwill-ing to die;

Let them consider, that they are but *short* and *sudden*; and though they are made by God our necessary passage into *Glory*, yet they shall soon be
over

over and forgot, when the Soul by death is set free from the Body, and takes its flight into the Presence of God in Heaven. And alas, what are the dying pains, and groaning gasps of departing Saints, compared to the Gripes and Stingings of an awakened Conscience for sin; and the horrid fears of the Wrath and Vengeance of God, which though they are not seen by others because inward; yet are they the frequent and daily Tormenting Exercises of sinners, both in Life and Death. And though the pains of the Godly in a dying hour, may sometimes be afflictive unto Sense; yet it often happens through the Goodness and Mercy of God to them, that their Fears in Life exceed their Pains in Death; and this King of Terrors doth not gripe so hard, nor stab so painfully, as we are apt to think: and if he doth, God many times comes in with such strong Consolations upon departing Souls. in the Manifestations of his Love to, and Presence with them, asturns their Fears and Sorrows into Joy and Rejoycing.

But if God should not manifest himself thus Comfortably unto some for their Support: but leave them to the feeling of their Fears by undergoing great pains in Death; yet as soon as the stroke is given, the pains are gone, and their fears are over. How quickly do the first openings of that Eternal Morning swallow up all the Remembrances of our dying sorrows. O when the Joys and Visions of our God invade and Exercise our departed Souls; then comes the great and welcome Pledge of our Eternal Conquest of this last Enemy, and after a short sleep of Bodies in the Dust, (whilst Souls return to God) the Trump will sound, the Lord will come, the World shall perish, or be refin'd by Flames, and the Dead shall rise and die no more; and then as the Apostle speaks, shall we be over with the Lord.

But

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But some may say, we could willingly die, but that we know not what will become of us hereafter; we cannot tell what our future State will be, and therefore we are afraid of Death. The desires we have of our Eternal Happiness puts us upon hoping the best, but our doubts and fears are so many, we cannot but tremble to think of our departure, because we are under such uncertainties, whither we shall go when Death takes us hence.

To this I Answer, who art thou that makest these *Objections*? Either thou art a *wicked Man*, or one that truly fearest God. If thou art a *Wicked Man*, under the guilt of thy *Sins*, and in an *unpardoned State*, I cannot wonder that thou art afraid of *Death*, nor can I blame thee that thou art *unwilling to die*: Thou hast cause enough to make thee *fear and tremble*. For there is nothing in *Death*, or what is to come after it, if thou understandest thy *danger aright*, but what might fill thee with the *greatest Terror and Consternation imaginable*. Whatever thou *fearest*, is to come; and may come quickly for ought thou knowest: is *infinitely far greater and worse* than what thou canst now *imagine*: what thou *feelest* or *fearest*, are but the beginning of thy *Sorrows*: nay all the *Miseries* thou canst meet with in *Life*, and all the *pains* that thou canst *suppose* to be in *Death*, fall infinitely short of those unconceivable *Horroures*, and *Miseries* that are the *Portion* of *Sinners* in the next *Life*. And for any *Comfort*, or *Relief* against *Death* whilst thou art in thy *Sinful State*, there is nor can be none. Thy *work* therefore, must be speedily to get into *Christ*; labour to have thy *Sins Pardoned*. Follow God with earnest *Cries, Tears*, and *Importunities* of *Soul*, that thy *sinful Nature* may be *changed and Sanctified*: and then let *Death* come when it will; though thou die under never such
fears

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fears and uncertainties as to thy future State, yet Eternal Happiness attends thee, and when Death hath once closed the Eyes of thy Body; the Eye of thy Soul will quickly be opened to thy everlasting Joy and Consolation.

If thou art one that truly fearest God, but yet art unwilling to die, because thou art uncertain, how it may go with thee as to thy Eternal State. Why then examine thine own heart, whether these fears do not proceed from thine own carelessness? God hath vouchsafed to thee many means and opportunities for the encreasing thy Knowledge, for the strengthening thy Faith, for the enlarging thy Love, for the confirming thy Hope, for the establishing thy Soul in the ways of God, and to provoke and stir thee up unto the continual Exercise of Grace, that hereby thou mightest grow up into some Knowledge and Assurance of his Love towards thee through Christ, and so mayest groundedly conclude the certainty of thy future Happiness. But thou hast been sloathful, not putting forth thyself with all diligence in the improving the Helps and Advantages God hath put into thy hands, and therefore thou art so in the Dark, and under fears; how it may go with thy Soul for ever, if this be thy case, go humble thy Soul before God, lie low in his presence, beg earnestly the manifestations of his Love and Favour towards thee: And for time to come, put forth the endeavours of thy Soul unto the utmost, in the use of all the means God vouchsafes unto thee for the removing thy Fears, satisfying thy Doubts, encreasing thy Knowledge, confirming thy Faith and Hope in a future State of Happiness provided for thee; and how soon God may come in, whilst thou art thus humbling thyself before him, and manifest his loving kindness unto thy Support and Comfort, thou knowest not. But however, if he should (for some
Reasons

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Reason thou canst not at present apprehend) leave thee to walk under thy *Doubts* and *Fears* still; yet if thou art sincere one that hath the *Grace of God in Truth* in thy *Soul*, I would say thus much, that these *Fears* and *Jealousies* about the attainment of the *Happiness* of *Heaven*, if it be a *Distemper* as it is become so natural to us all; that it is with much difficulty cured in this present State, but yet it may be with great diligence and industry of *Soul*. But for thy *Comfort*, O doubting *Believer*, know; though these *Doubts* and *Fears* are sinful, and thou dost thereby provoke *God*; yet they shall not prejudice thy future *Happiness*, though they may and do often hinder thy present *Peace* and *Comfort*. For certainly *God* will never Damn a *Believing Soul*, let such a one think what he will of himself. For though thou art not assured that thou art his, yet *God* knows all those that are his, and not one of them shall *Eternally* perish. Suppose therefore, that thou shouldst die under *Doubts* and *Jealousies*, and thy *Soul* should go out of this *World*, sitting in a *Cloud of Tears*, this hinders not, but it may arise in a fair morning of *Glory*. *Heaven* only is a place privileged from *Tears* and *Fears*.

But may some *Soul* say, I am not willing to die, because I fear I have no *Grace*, or at least it is but little that I have; for when I compare my self with others, the most I can say of my self is this: that all my *Grace* and *Holiness* lies in a *Love to Grace*, and in a desire after *Holiness*; I hope through *Grace* I can say, that there is nothing in all the *World*, if I might have my choice, that I desire more than to be like my Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. But O how short do I fall, both of my *Rule* and of my *Desires*: my walkings in the ways of *God* are very uneven and unconstant; the corruptions of my heart are so great and so frequently breaking forth,

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VI. *forth, by Fleſhly Affections and Worldly Deſires, that if there be any Grace within me, it is very hard to diſcern it by reaſon of the ſin that doth accompany and go along with it; and how then ſhould ſuch a one as I dare to think of dying. Were Grace ſtrong and vigorous, could I ſenſibly find the ſtrength, encrease and growth of it in a tendency towards perfection, I could then think of dying with ſome courage. But the weakneſs and imperfection of Grace much diſcourageth me, that I cannot with any willingneſs and chearfulneſs entertain the thoughts of it in my Soul.*

To this I Answer, let not the thoughts of Death diſcourage thee, O weak Chriſtian, for Death can no more, ſhall no more hinder the Happineſs of a weak Believer, than of a ſtrong Believer. It is true, a ſtrong Faith may carry thee more comfortably to Heaven, but a weak Faith will carry thee as truly to Heaven: For Faith lives not as it is ſtrong or weak, but as it is true; and a weak Faith is true Faith as well as a ſtrong Faith. Grace and Holineſs is of *Absolute* neceſſity for every Chriſtian; for without them it is *impoſſible* to pleaſe God, or to enjoy him. For as the Apoſtle ſaith, *Without Holineſs no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord.* But yet all Chriſtians are not equally Holy; there is a *meaſure*, or ſtature to which all Chriſtians are appointed in Chriſt Jeſus: but this meaſure, or ſtature, is not the ſame to every Chriſtian: ſome Chriſtians have a longer term of *Life* than others; ſome have more means and opportunities than others; and ſome have greater *Parts* and *Abilities* than others. Now God is not a ſevere Maſter, expecting to reap where he hath not ſown, or to gather where he hath not ſtrowed: God doth not look for what he doth not give, where he gives more, he expects the more; but where he gives leſs, he expects the leſs.

Chriſtians

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Christians to whom God hath given great parts and *Abilities* with great means and opportunities of *Grace* even unto Old Age, from such God expects much, because he hath given much. Ordinary degrees of *Grace* must not serve their turns; but they must transcend others in *Faith*, *Love*, *Humility*, and all other *Graces*, contending for the attaining unto the *State of the Resurrection from the dead*. But now for others, whose parts have been low; whose means and opportunities are small, and their time in the World but short: God doth not expect that the *Beauty* of their *Grace* should shine so *Gloriously* as others. Say not therefore O doubting *Christian*, that thou knowest not, believest not, lovest not, delightest not in God, to that degree that others do. It may be thou dost not; but if thy *Knowledge*, *Faith*, *Love* and *Delight* be not so great as others, yet thy *Grace* may be as true and as real as any others. In a *Star* there is as true light as in the *Sun*, though there be more light in the *Sun*. And thy *Grace* though little and weak, is true *Grace*; though it be not so much, nor so strong as others. Quiet thy self therefore, O drooping Soul; for such may be the *weakness* of thy parts, such the *smallness* of the means of *Grace* that thou enjoyest, and so few the *Talents* thou art intrusted withal, that God expects not so much from thee as he doth from others: And if the Great God will accept of, yea Reward the little that thou hast, why shouldest thou be troubled or disquieted? God doth not despise the day of small things, and why shouldest thou? A little *Grace*, yea the least of *Grace* is too good to be cast away. Though thou couldst not be Saved without a strong Saviour, and therefore *Christ* is said to travail in the greatness of his Strength mighty to Save: yet a little *Faith* laying hold upon this strong Saviour, will keep thee from perishing:

perishing: be not therefore discouraged, O Christian, fear not *Death*, though thy *Grace* be weak and imperfect, and so may not give thee that comfort in *Death* that thou expectest, yet shall it as truly overcome *Death* through the strength of *Christ*, as the strongest *Grace*; and though *Death* kill thee, yet it shall not hurt thee; nay it shall make for thy *Eternal Advantage*, for it shall be the ending of all thy *Fears*, but the beginning of thy *Eternal Joys and Rejoycings*.

But may some poor Soul say, I want the assurance of the Love and Favour of God, and this makes me unwilling to die; were I but assured my sins are pardoned, and God reconciled to my Soul through *Jesus Christ*, I could then chearfully submit my self to the stroke of *Death*; but this is that which affrightens me, I fear lest God is mine Enemy, and then I am sure death cannot be my Friend, and how then shall I dare to think of dying in this Condition?

To this I Answer; art thou under some fears and apprehensions that God is not thy reconciled Father in *Jesus Christ*, though I cannot blame thee that thou art fearful of dying under such apprehensions; yet I must blame thee for thy former negligence, that thou hast not made this sure to thy self in the time of thy health and strength. Next to dying in a State of impenitency, and the Horrors of Conscience, under the fore tastes of Hell and Wrath: dying under the apprehensions and fears of God's being our Enemy, is the most dreadful condition that can be, for though our future safety and happiness depends not upon our assurance that God is at peace with us, yet our present Comfort doth: and it is all one as to the present quietation and satisfaction of our Souls when we are a dying, whether God be our Enemy or no; if he will not
smile

smile upon us when our Souls are a-departing; but leave us in that hour, as our last punishment for some sin that he hath been provoked by; to breath forth our Souls under the apprehensions of his Wrath and Displeasure. Assurance of the Love and Favour of God, to know that our sins are Pardoned, and we accepted in the Beloved; to know the joyful sound, to have the light of God's Countenance lifted up upon our Souls, when we are passing through the gloomy Valley of the shadow of Death. For God not only to Love us, but to tell us that he Loves us, and to manifest it to us by shedding abroad his Love into our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, so as to fill us with Joy and Peace by believing this is Life, nay this loving kindness of God is better than Life; it is the Suburbs of Heaven; yea, it is Heaven it self, for it is as much of Heaven as we can desire or contain of Heaven whilst we are on this side Heaven. On the contrary to be doubting of the Love and Favour of God, to fear he is our Enemy, that we are yet in our Sins, liable unto the Wrath and Vengeance of God, this is very sad and uncomfortable; yea, some resemblance of Hell it self; especially if Conscience be awakned, and these Apprehensions and Jealousies continue upon us under the approaches of Death: this therefore must needs be very Afflictive to a poor doubting Soul. But yet be not discouraged; for it is the Condition of many of God's Children for a long time to remain doubtful, both as to their present State in Grace, and their future State of Glory. There are Believers of divers growths in the Church of God, Fathers, Young-men, Children, and Babes. And as it is in most Families in the World, there are more Babes, and Children, than grown Men: So is it in the Church of God, there are more weak and doubting Christians, than strong Men who are grown

grown up unto a full Assurance. But remember the Promise is made to the *being* of Faith, not to the Knowledge and Evidence of it; to Faith as it is a true Faith, not to Faith as it is a strong Faith. Heaven may be sure to those, who yet in their own Apprehensions may not be assured of Heaven. Live therefore by Faith, O Christian, when thou canst not live by Sense and Feeling; and know that, that God who hath given thee a true Judgment to value Jesus Christ, and a Sanctified Will to choose him, with ardent and strong Affections to Love him and desire him, and supported thee under the fears of sin and guilt, will come in with assurance also, if he sees it good for thee: And know also for thy Comfort, that many of God's People have languished a long time under the want of assurance, and some of them most part of their lives, yea, and in their last Sickness, and almost to their last gasp, and then God hath Graciously come in and Sealed up his Love and Favour to their Souls, whereby they have been filled with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. Never fear death therefore, for want of assurance, for that is the most usual time when God doth bestow it upon his People. But if he doth not then give thee this assurance, yet he will put under his Everlasting Arms that shall bear thee up notwithstanding all thy fears and doubts and carry thee safe through the pains of Death into Glory, where thou shalt have as much of the Love of God, and of the Assurance thereof as thou canst wish or desire.

But may some say, were we prepared to die, we could willingly embrace Death whensoever God sends it. But alas, our State and Condition is such, that we fear we are not fit for Death, and how then can we Comfortably think of dying?

I Answer, if this be the true case of thy Soul, as thy Fears suggest, that thou art not really prepared for

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for *Death*, thy *Condition* is *sad* and *dangerous*, and if *Death* seize upon thee in this *State*, thou art *irrecoverably* miserable, and all the *Comfort* that can be given unto thee is this, that yet there is a *possibility* of *Salvation*, as yet there is some *hope* because thou art not *actually* under the *power* of *Death*; God is yet *waiting*, *time* is yet *lengthened* out, *space* is yet *granted* to you to *prepare* to meet this *King* of *Terrors*: And in the *Improvement* of these lies all your *Hopes* for *Heaven* and *Eternity*. You have hitherto been great *loiterers* in your *great work*, *spent* much of your *precious* time to little purpose, *neglected* many *opportunities*, *lost* many *warnings* vouchsafed to you: Now therefore be *diligent*: What was the whole *time* of your *Life* given you for, but to *prepare* for *Death*, and have you *lived* so many years in the *World* to prepare for your *last* hour, and are you still both *unwilling* and *unfit* to *die*? What have you been *doing*? wherefore is it that you have *lived*? have you had any *business* of *greater concernment* to mind, than to be *prepared* for your *latter end*? O foolish *Souls* and *unwise*, who else would run such *desperate hazards*? God hath *frequently* told you that you must *die*, how often hath *Death* by *God's* appointment come among your *Acquaintance* and *Relations*, and sometimes into your own *Habitations*, and snatched away many before your *Eyes*; how often hath it been told you, such a *Friend* is *dead* in such a *place*, and such an *Acquaintance* in another *place*, and such a *Relation* in such a *Family*? And by all these *warnings* will you not believe that you are *Mortal*, and shall shortly *die* as well as others? If you do *believe* it, where is the *preparation* you make for it, when you are still *crying out*, O you are not *fit* to *die*? was not this your *Language* long since? how many years hath it been heard from you?

When

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When God hath visited you with Sickness not once but often, and you were going down into the *Chambers of the Grave* in your own apprehensions: did you not then cry out, Lord I am not ready, O spare me yet a little longer, that I may recover my strength, yet once again, before I go away from hence and shall be seen no more; and God was nigh to your Voice, and heard your Cry and granted your Request, and tried you once and again a little longer; and what are you not yet fit to die? whose fault is it? surely your own. And if Death take you away in this State, you will justly bear the blame and punishment of it for ever. Whoever thou art into whose hands these lines may fall, presently put thy self upon the Trial, how it is with thee, and endeavour to put the Question out of doubt, think not that God must wait upon you whilst you dally and trifle away your time: hast thou been careless and negligent formerly, be so no longer; O search and examine thy Soul, and follow the search close and home to thy Conscience till thou come fully and clearly to discern how it is with thee; idle not away thy time one moment longer, but begin this day, delay not thy Preparations for Death until to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. What is requisite to make thy preparations such as may render Death Comfortable in thy thoughts and Expectations, I have already laid down in the third Chapter of this Treatise to which I refer thee.

But notwithstanding what hath been spoken, because there may yet be some fears arising in the hearts of some troubled Christian's, which they cannot get the Victory over, so as readily and willingly to submit unto Death, I shall in the next place propose some Consolatory Considerations for their Encouragement and support against a dying hour. As,
First,

First, Consider that Gracious Promise God hath made unto his People in all Ages, that he will never leave them nor forsake them. And this is a Cordial so full of Divine Consolation, that if Christians did but believe and live up to the Comfort that might be drawn from it, they would not fear, much less sink under any Affliction that can befall them. It was no small Trial St. Paul was under, when after his being rapt up into the third Heavens, where he heard things that were unspeakable, or impossible to be uttered: he had given him a Thorn in the Flesh, the Messenger of Satan to Buffet him; upon which he makes his Prayer thrice, that it might be removed from him. What Answer now doth he receive from God? why the Thorn remains in his Flesh still, and the Messenger of Satan continues to Buffet him; but yet he hath a better return to his Prayer, even the making good of this Gracious Promise to him, that God would not leave him nor forsake him: for says God, My Grace shall be sufficient for thee, my Strength is made perfect in Weakness. And therefore the Apostle cries out in the deepest of his Afflictions, with Transports of Joy, most gladly therefore will I Glory in my Infirmities, that the Power of Christ may rest upon me; yea, says he, I take pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong; for I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me, 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10. Thus for God to stand by his People, and to strengthen them under their Afflictions, is more than for God to deliver them out of them, and he always doth the one or the other, if he deliver not his People out of afflictions; he always strengthens them under them; and the greater the Afflictions of any of his People are, the more is his Power seen in supporting them, because they

they then most need it. Therefore, says God, when thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee, they shall not overflow thee; and when thou walkest thorough the Fire, thou shalt not be burnt, Esai. 43. 2. Take Courage therefore, O Christian, be not afraid of any Affliction; be not afrighted, no not at the sight of death it self; though thou see it it is a narrow passage, a way beset with Briars and Thorns; though it be a strait Gate for Flesh and Blood to pass through, yet fear not; for it is the Gate of Heaven, the way that leads unto Glory. Be not afraid therefore to walk in the valley of the shadow of death; though love of Friends, and strength of Body fail thee, yet fear not, for God will be with thee, his Rod and his Staff will support and comfort thee, he will be your God and your Guide, not only unto death, but for ever and ever; for he will never, never, never leave his People, nor forsake them, till he hath brought them to the eternal enjoyment of himself in Glory.

Secondly, Wouldst thou, O Christian, be comforted and supported against death, then much and often meditate upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Now though every thing in Christ, and every thing done by Christ, be exceeding sweet and precious; for unto them that believe, he is precious. Christ, and whole Christ is precious; for there is nothing in him, or done by him, that we can tell how to want. But yet I shall instance in some few things more particularly, which may be of great Use unto a Christian to meditate upon for his support against the hour of Death: As,

First, Meditate often upon the Death and Sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now though in general these were so great, that they exceed all our Expressions and Apprehensions; yet how willingly and patiently did he undergo them all; both from

God and Man, in his *Body* and in his *Soul*? His *Body* was *racked* and *tortured* in all the parts of it; but especially in those parts wherein the sense is most *quick*; and therefore his *Pain* and *Anguish* was most *afflicting*. They *digged* or *pierced* my *hands* and my *feet*, saith the Psalmist of him, *Psal.* 22. 16. He *suffered* in his *Soul* also; for he *conflicted* with the *wrath* of an *angry God*, which was *impress'd* upon him in such a *dreadful* manner; that had he not had the *strength* of the *Deity* to *support* him, it had certainly *overwhelm'd* him, and *ground* him to *Powder*: For it was *pure Wrath* without the least *mixture* of *sparing Mercy*, the *great God* bated him nothing. That's a sweet *Scripture*, *Rom.* 8. 32. *God spared not his own Son*: And it was well for us that he did not; for had he *spared* him, he had not *spared* us. His *Death* was not *common* and *ordinary*, but a *Death* by *Crucifixion*; he *humbled* himself, and *became obedient* unto *Death*, even the *death* of the *Cross*, which was a *violent death*, considered in it self; and therefore he is said to be *cut off* out of the *Land* of the *Living*, though in respect of himself it was *voluntary*; and therefore he tells us I lay down my *Life* of my self, *John* 10. 18. And indeed *Christ* must either *die* a *voluntary Death*, or none at all; *partly* because there was no *Sin* in him to *deserve Death*, and *partly*, because otherwise his *death* had not been a *Sacrifice* acceptable and *satisfactory* unto *God* for us; for that which *died* of it self was never *offered* in *Sacrifice*, but that which was *slain* in its full force and *strength*. This *death* of *Christ* was also full of *exquisite Pain* and *Torture*; and therefore when he was going to *encounter* with it, he *screws* up his *Request* to his *Father* to the highest pitch, *Matth.* 26. 39. *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*. It was also a *death* full of *shame*, than which

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which nothing is more cutting to an ingenious, noble Spirit. And truly in this respect, the Thieves that suffered with him, fared better than he; for they had no Taunts, Reproaches, and Sarcasms cast upon them; they only encountered with Pain: But Christ had Pain and Shame also; for the Souldiers, the Jews, the Thieves, all scoffed and flouted at him: And therefore, says the Apostle, he not only endured the Cross, but he despised the shame, Heb. 12. 2. But this is not all, for the death of Christ was a cursed death; Pain was bad, and Shame was worse, but the Curse is worst of all; for he that is hanged on a Tree, is accursed of God; and therefore Christ that he might shew the greatness of his Love to his People, redeemed them from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for them, Gal. 3. 13. Now though Christ knew that all these Sufferings and this death should befall him; yet so great was his Love to Believers, that he underwent all willingly and patiently. What godly Man on Earth, what Saint or Angel in Heaven can read or hear those Words of his, in Luke 12. 50. without Astonishment, where speaking of his death and sufferings, he saith, *he had a Baptism to be baptized withal, which was a Baptism of Blood?* And how am I straitned till it be accomplished? Indeed it is said, when the time of his sufferings drew near, that he began to be sorrowful, that he was sore amazed and very heavy: My Soul, says he, is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Not that Christ repented of his Undertaking when he was to suffer; no, for when the time of his suffering was come, the Holy History tells us, he not only went to a place that Judas who betrayed him knew of, that so he might be the more readily taken; but when his Enemies came thither to apprehend him, he went forth to meet them, and asked them, *Whom seek ye?* And when

they told him *Jesus of Nazareth*, he tells them, *I am he*; upon which, they fell to the ground; and as if they were more afraid to apprehend and bring him to his sufferings, than he was to suffer; he speaks to them again, and by his Words (*Oh how willingly, blessed Jesus, didst thou go to suffer!*) he doth, as it were, strengthen and encourage them to go on in their work of laying hold of him; he said therefore unto them a second time, *Whom seek ye?* They said *Jesus of Nazareth*; *Jesus answered them, I have told you that I am he*; if therefore you seek me, behold here I am. He was a Volunteer in his dying and offering up of himself. His death was a Free-will Offering, and this made him to become a Sacrifice, *Psal. 40. 7, 8. Then, said I, loe I come! In the Volume of thy Book, it is written of me, I delight to do thy Will, O God; yea, thy Law is within my heart.* As if he had said, my very heart is ready for the shedding of my heart-blood. Therefore, says he, *I lay down my life, no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my self; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up, John 10. 17, 18.* As if he had said, if it were not my pleasure to part with it, all that Men or Devils could do, they were not able to wrest it out of my hands.

Now though Christ by his death and sufferings accomplished several ends, as the satisfaction of the Justice of God, the procuring Pardon and Remission of Sin, and the obtaining Heaven; yet this also was one end of his death, and a very comfortable one too, and that is the overcoming of death for Believers. Christ Jesus the Lord of Life and Glory, hath by his death spoiled Principalities and Powers, and made a skew of them openly, triumphing over them in his Cross: By his death, he hath not only destroyed death, but *also that had the power of death,*
that

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that is the Devil, and delivered them, who through fear of death, were all their lives-time subject unto that bondage. The Blood of Jesus Christ hath slain death's Enmity; not that death is so destroyed that Believers shall not die, but it is *unstring*: It still wears its Dart, by which it strikes all Men, but it hath lost its sting by which it hurts. Is death therefore riding, upon its pale Horse, and making haste towards thee, O Believer, fear it not, be not dismayed at it; though there may be much of pain in it, yet there is nothing of the Curse in it; it is as a Serpent without a sting, thou mayest take it into thy hand, yea into thy bosom, without danger. Death poured out all its Poison upon Christ, when he was made a Curse; it fastned, yea, it lost its sting in his blessed Side: And who would fear an Enemy that is conquered? Death to a Believer, is not only an innocent, harmless thing, but it is one of his best Friends: death is yours, says the Apostle, speaking to Believers. It is theirs as a special Privilege. When Christ was upon the Cross, there was a Contention between him and death; and as it was prophesied of him, he was then the plague of death, and the destruction of the Grave, for he swallowed them up in Victory: So that now death drives but a poor Trade among Believers; all that it can do is but to destroy the Body, and to fright some that are weak in the Faith, but it cannot hurt them; Victory over death is as sure to them as if they had already overcome; and therefore, says the Apostle, speaking of Death and the Grave, Thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Meditate upon the Resurrection of Christ. This is a great Fundamental Article of the Christian Religion, that upon which the Faith,

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the *Hope* and *Happiness* of a *Christian* for *Eternity* is built ; for as *Christ* died for our *Sins*, so he arose again for our *Justification* : And if *Christ* had not risen, the *Faith* and *Hope* of a *Christian* is but *vain* : If *Christ* be not risen, a *Christian* shall not rise ; and if there be no *Resurrection*, there is no *Life* everlasting. If *Christians* have hope only in this *Life*, they are of all *Men* most miserable. But blessed be *God*, *Christ* is risen, and therefore the *Faith* and *Hope* of a *Christian* stands firm ; for it is built upon the *Rock* of *Ages*, against which, as the *Gates* of *Death* did not, so the *Gates* of *Hell* shall not prevail. That *Christ* is risen, the *Scripture* is clear ; an *Angel* declares it, *Matth.* 28. 6. He is not here, he is risen, as he said, Come see the place where the *Lord* lay. *Holy Men*, who were *Eye-witnesses* hereof, give their *Testimony* to this *Truth*, when our *Lord* shewed himself alive to them by the space of *Forty Days*, in nine several *Apparitions*, and once was he seen of five hundred *Brethren* together, *1 Cor.* 15. 6. And, says the *Apostle*, *Acts* 2. 24. He was raised from the dead, the pains or bands of death being loosed, because it was not possible he should be holden of them : It was possible *Death* should seize upon him, and so it did, he willingly yielding himself up unto it ; because as our *Surety*, he owed a death by way of satisfaction to the *Justice* of *God* for our *sins*, which he had taken upon him, and accordingly he paid it, otherwise *Death* could not have taken hold of him. But though death did take hold of him, yet could it not keep it ; though it had possession of him in the *Grave*, yet it could not keep him there ; no that was impossible ; partly, because he is *life*, essentially *life* ; so himself tells us, *I am the Resurrection and the Life* : Now it is not possible for death to hold life it self longer under its power, than he who is *life* it self

self pleaseth. And then partly it was not possible Christ should be held under the power of death in respect of us: for having undertaken the great work of restoring us unto life, if his life had been subdued by death, if he had been held down a Prisoner under the power of death and the grave, we had been lost and undone for ever; for as the Apostle argues, if Christ be not risen, then our Faith is vain, we are yet in our sins: But Christ being to carry on the work of our Redemption to perfection, though he submitted himself to die, yet was it impossible Death should have Dominion over him for ever; Christ therefore is risen, and he is risen as a publick Person in the behalf of all Believers, who are therefore called the Children of the Resurrection, and said to be risen with him, Eph. 2. 6. Christ's Resurrection is not only the Cause of a Believer's Resurrection, but the security of his happy Resurrection; therefore he is said to be the first fruits of them that sleep: Now as the first fruits did both assure and sanctifie the whole Harvest; so doth Christ do for Believers; by his Resurrection he assures them of their Resurrection, and sanctifies it also, that it shall be a blessed Resurrection, even unto an Eternity of Happiness. And therefore it is with respect to Believers, that Christ is called the First-born, or the first begotten from the dead; who are in their time and order to be born from the dead, the Resurrection giving New Birth or Being unto those bodies, which while they were in the Grave seemed to have none. For as certainly as the whole Harvest follows the first Fruits; so doth the general Resurrection of Believers at the last day follow the Resurrection of Christ: For as the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. 15. and 12. If Christ be risen from the dead, how can it be, but that there must be a Resurrection from the dead? If we acknowledge

ledge the *Body of Christ* is risen, we cannot rationally deny the *Resurrection* of our own bodies, because *Christ's Resurrection* is not only the *Exemplar* of our *Resurrection*, but the *Cause* of it; for because *Christ* and *Believers* are but one *Mystical Body*, he the *Head*, they the *Members*; and the *Head* being risen, the *Members* shall not always lie rotting in the *Grave*, but shall in due time arise also: For the *Spirit of Life* that is in *Christ Jesus* the *Head*, will diffuse it self into all its *Members*, to quicken and raise them also in the morning of the *Resurrection*.

And indeed *Christ* is not perfectly risen till all *Believers* are risen also: For though *Christ's* personal *Resurrection*, was perfect when he arose out of the *Grave*; and though all *Believers* did then arise with *Christ* representatively; yet till all *Believers* arise personally at the last day, the *Resurrection* of *Christ* hath not received its full perfection. How comfortable therefore is this to a *Believer* to consider, that by the same *Faith* that he puts *Christ's Resurrection* into the *Premises*, he may put his own *Resurrection* into the *Conclusion*. If *Christ* be in you, says the *Apostle*, speaking to *Believers*, in *Rom. 8. 10, 11.* The body is dead; it is a poor, frail, dying body, because of sin: And though you are really united unto *Christ* by his *Spirit* dwelling in you, which is a great and glorious Privilege; yet your bodies must die, as well as others; but the *Spirit*, saith he, is life because of Righteousness: Though your bodies die, your souls shall be swallowed up in life upon your dissolution; this Happiness *Believers* have even in death. But this is not all; for, saith the *Apostle*, if the Spirit of him that raised up *Jesus* from the dead dwell in you; what then, why though your bodies must fall by Death

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into the Grave ; yet they shall rise and live again at the Resurrection, and that by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in you, and is the Bond of your Mystical Union with him, who is your Head : for, says the Apostle, *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your Mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Because Christ is your Head, and his Spirit dwelleth in you, you shall be raised again, and that not as others, by a meer word of his Power as the wicked are ; but by the Spirit of Life dwelling in Christ your Head ; which is an excellent Priviledge indeed. O the Consolation that the hope of the Resurrection fills the Believing Soul withal ; it is this Blessed Hope that supports it, not only under the Troubles of Life, but makes it Triumph even under the Pains and Agonies of Death it self.

Thirdly, Meditate frequently upon the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. Now this Ascension of Christ into Heaven, as it was full of Glory and Triumph in respect of himself : so is it full of admirable Comfort in respect of Believers. As to himself his Ascension was Triumphant, a Cloud was prepared as a Royal Chariot to carry up this King of Glory into Heaven, so it is laid in Acts 11. 10. *That whilst his Disciples beheld he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their sight ;* and no doubt, a Royal Guard of Angels attended the Solemnity of their Lord's Ascension. If when Christ came into the World to suffer, Angels waited upon him, for even then it was said of him, *Let all the Angels of God Worship him ;* surely much more then now that he hath finished the work of Mans Redemption, do the Angels Worship him in his return to Heaven again, where he is exalted to have a Name above every Name, that at the Name

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of *Jesus* every knee should bow, both of things in Heaven, and things on Earth, and things under the Earth, and that every Tongue should confess, that *Jesus* is Lord to the Glory of God the Father.

But may a poor Believer say, what is all this to me, what am I the better that *Christ* is Ascended and Exalted thus in Glory?

Yes this is much for the advantage of Believers, for it is the same *Jesus* that was Crucified for them, that God hath made both Lord and *Christ*. It is he who took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of *Abraham*, who is Exalted above Angels; being gone into Heaven, Angels, Principalities and Powers being made subject unto him. It is this *Jesus Christ*, whom God hath raised from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the Heavenly places far above all Principality, and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, Ephes. 1. 20, 21. *Christ* Ascended into Heaven as a publick Person, or the fore-runner of Believers; for he is not gone to take possession of Heaven only for himself, but also in our Name and for us. So the Apostle tells us, Heb. 6. 20. speaking of the most Holy place, within the Vail; whither, says he, the fore-runner, that is, *Christ*, is for us entred. And if we will not believe the Apostle, *Christ* himself tells us the same thing, John 14. 2. In my Father's House are many Mansions, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also. *Christ* is now in Heaven transacting the Affairs and Concerns of Believers, both for their present Peace and Comfort, and for their future Eternal Happiness;

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ness; not only by *intercepting* the daily cry of their *sins*, by the continual *Representation* of his *Death* and *Sufferings* unto his *Father*, and so making an *Atonement* and *Reconciliation* with *God* for them; but by the *Blood* of his *Cross*, he maintains this *Peace*, and keeps up good thoughts in *God* towards *Believers*, *sprinkling* their *poor* and *weak*, but *sincere Services* with the *Incense* of his own *Merits*: so that though both they and their *Services* deserve to be *rejected* for their own sakes, yet they shall *both* be *accepted* for *Christ's sake*. This now is something that *Christ* is doing in *Heaven* in the behalf of *Believers*, since he is *Ascended* to his *Father* and to their *Father*, to his *God* and to their *God*. But yet this is not all, for in that comfortable *Prayer* of his to his *Father*, before his *Ascension* into *Heaven*, (which is, say some, the *Copy* of his *Intercession* now he is in *Heaven*) he doth as it were tell us, that he looks not upon himself as *perfectly Happy*, until he hath the *whole number* of *Believers* with him in *Glory*; and therefore, says he, *John 17. 24. Father I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold, that is, that they may enjoy my Glory which thou hast given me.* O what *Comfort* then is here to all *Believers* against the *Fears* of *Death*, for assure thy self O *Believing Soul*, that neither *Death*, nor the *Grave* shall be a *bar* to thy *Happiness*: thou must *die* it is true, so did *Christ*, but he is *Risen* and *Ascended* up into *Heaven*, and so shalt thou also in due time, and therefore says the *Apostle*, *He hath made us sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephes. 2. 6.* Salvation and *Happiness* is made sure to a *Believer* by *Christ*, for if when we were *Enemies*, we were reconciled unto *God* by the death of his *Son*, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by his *Life*. For certainly,

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tainly, he is able to save unto the utmost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them. Christ hath not lost his Love and Affection to his People by his Advancement. Harbour not therefore, O Believing Soul, any suspicious thoughts in thy Heart concerning him, as if by his Exaltation into Heaven, he were now become forgetful of any of his Members here below groaning under Sin or Misery; for though the days of his Passion are ended, yet so are not the days of his Compassion. He retains the same Temper and Disposition of Soul now he is in Glory; his Heart is not changed, though his Condition be; but he still bears the same Respect to his People now, that he did when he was on Earth: for indeed he there Lives and Acts upon the account of Believers, so says the Apostle, He appears in the presence of God for us, Heb. 9. 24.

Doth God, O Believing Soul, by Diseases and Distempers upon thy outward Man, cause thy Beauty and Comeliness to consume and wither: hath long and tedious Sicknesses almost wasted and destroyed thy Body? and by all art thou brought so low that thou despairest of Life? Doth Death seem to be written upon all thy helps to Life? And do all the means that are used for thy Recovery, seem rather to further thy Dissolution, than any way to hinder it? Why, yet fear not Death, but Remember as God hath Glorified and highly Exalted Jesus Christ, whose Form and Visage as the Prophet speaks, was mayr'd more than any Mans; so he will Exalt thee also, not to an Equality of Glory with Christ, for in Heaven he shall be the Light and the Glory of it, but yet there shall be some likeness and Conformity in all the Members of Christ, unto him who is their Head. Fear not therefore, O Christian, the worst that Death, or the Grave
can

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can do unto thee, for *assure* thy self as because he *lives*, *Believers* shall *live* also, so where he *lives* there *Believers* shall *live* also.

Thirdly, Another Consideration for the removal of the *fear of Death*, is *frequent Meditation of the Happiness of the Soul in Death. and of the Resurrection of the Body after Death.* As for the *Happiness* of the *Souls of Believers in death*, it is exceeding great, the *Body* at present suffers *loss*, for though once it was an excellent *Fabrick*, the *Workmanship of God's hands*, yet being forsaken by the *Soul*, it is become *loathsome*, and turns to *Corruption* and *rottenness*; so says the *Wise Man*, *The Body returns to the dust from whence it was taken*; there to *consume* and *moulder away*; this is the *State of Man's Body in Death*, procured by *Sin*, and inflicted by *God*: But now for the *Soul* that returns to *God that gave it*, either to partake of *Eternal Blessedness*, or to receive *Eternal Punishments*. Now that the *Happiness of Believers in their Souls* is great at *Death*, will appear, if we consider, either the *Evils* they are freed from or the *Blessedness* they attain unto; as for the *Evils* that accompany our present State in this *Life*. *Death* frees *Believers* from them all at once; during this *Mortal Life* indeed, *Sufferings* are annexed to the *State of a Christian*, as a necessary *Appendix* to his very *Being*, for such is our condition while we are here, that *Afflictions* are almost become as *needful* for the *Soul*, as *Food* and *Raiment* is for the *Body*, therefore saith the *Apostle*, *if need be you are in heaviness through manifold Tribulations*, 1 Pet. 1. 6. *God sees it needful that Afflictions should be*, and in his *Wisdom and Mercy* he proportions the *Afflictions* of his *People* to their *necessities*. This *Life* is a *Life of Suffering* unto the *People of God*, it is their appointed

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pointed *Path* and *Way* through which they must walk to Heaven; therefore says the Apostle, *We must through many Tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God.* It is appointed for us so to do. And indeed, as *Job* speaks, *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;* he comes into the World crying, and all the rest of his time between the *Cradle* and the *Grave* he is not much *Happier*; for his *Life* is made up of *Sin* and *Suffering*; the *Evil* of *Sin* and the *Evil* of *Suffering*: there is a kind of a continual *Chaining* or *Linking* together of one *Misery* or *Affliction* to another; a *mixture* of *Pain* and *Sorrow*, or *Succession* of *Evils* and *Troubles*, that runs through all his days; as one *Wave* falls upon the neck of another, so one *Evil* is no sooner gone, but another comes in its room. One depth as the *Psalmist* speaks, calls upon another. *Floods* and *Storms* of *Miseries* and *Afflictions* daily pass over our heads. And if *Troubles* and *Afflictions* come not of themselves, nor are caused by others, we can *Mint* and *Coin* them our selves by our *Sins*. Our Lord tells us, *That sufficient to the day, that is to every day are the Evils and Troubles thereof*; but as if they were not enough, we can create *Troubles* to our selves before hand, and *Anticipate* in our *Fancies* and *Apprehensions* for our greater *Vexation* and *Trouble*, *Evils* that are to come, though we know not whether we our selves shall live till they come. And herein we are more cruel to our selves, than the *Devil* is to himself, for that *Evil Spirit* cares not to be *Tormented* before his time; whereas we *antidate*, and bring *Evils* that are at a distance from us nearer to us by *unquiet Apprehensions*, and *sinful distracting Vexations* entertained in our minds; and so the fears of *Miseries* to come, make us far more miserable, than when those *miseries* are come upon us, and by the *Apprehension* of an imaginary Evil,

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Evil, we make it become a real *Affliction* and an *unfeigned Torment* to us in our *resentment* of it. Thus *Sin* and *Sorrow*, *Afflictions* and *Temptations* divide our *days* and *time*, while we are here, until *Death* comes for a *Believers* relief, and then there shall be an end put to all his *Sorrows* and *Sufferings*, because there shall be an end of *Sinning*. After *Death* there shall be no *Cries* nor *Tears* under any *Miseries* or *Afflictions*, no *fears* of future *Evils*, nor no *grief* for *past sins* the causes of them, no *Poverty* or *Distress* shall come near that *Holy place*, the *Habitation* of *Holy Souls*; all the *Inhabitants* there are become *Kings*, possessed of *Riches* and *Glory* without *value*. Fear not therefore, O *dying Believer*, whose *Soul* by *Death* is getting free from thy *Body*; for thou art but removing from *Earth* to *Heaven*, where thou shalt *instantly* be with thy *dear Lord* and *Saviour*; thou art but going to thy *God* and *Father*, and the *Father* of *Spirits*, to visit those *Mansions* of *Glory* that are there prepared for thee: *Cheerfully* therefore, take thy leave of thy *Body*, and let it know that thou art taking thy flight to *Heaven*, during the time that it shall sleep in the dust of the *Grave* until the morning of the *Resurrection*, where thou shalt be out of the reach of all *Afflictions*, and *Sorrows*, and where thou canst not be endangered by *sin*, the *Tempter*, or any of his *Temptations*.

And concerning the *Resurrection* of the *Body*, it is not only one of the most *Excellent Mysteries* of the *Christian Religion*, but it is also one of its *Glorious Advantages*. It is that which the *Heathens* with all their deep *Reasonings*, could never attain to the understanding of; but though *Humane Reason* be blind and cannot find out this *Glorious Mystery*, yet we who are *Christians*, have the *sure* and *certain Knowledge* of it discovered to us by *Divine Revelation*;

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Revelation ; and when *Reason* is once *savingly enlightened* from above, O how the *Justice* and *necessity* of the future *Resurrection* of the *Body*, is not only *acknowledged*, but *admired*. I *confess* when a *Believer* is cast upon his *Death-bed*, and his *Soul* ready to take its leave of the *Body* in its *passage* unto *Heaven*, it is no *small cause* of *Joy* and *rejoycing*, to consider that as soon as it hath cast off its *Earthly Tabernacle*, it shall be immediately admitted into the *Glorious Presence* of *God himself*, where it shall *view* and *contemplate* his *Face* with *infinite* and *unspeakable delight* and *satisfaction*. But yet that *Holy Joy* and that *Heavenly Sweetness*, which sometimes is so *Powerful* that it *Ravisheth* the *Soul* of a *Believer* on a *Death-bed*, whilst it *Contemplates* that *Happiness* to which it is going ; may be *disturbed* and *imbittered* by the *Consideration* of the *poor Bodies* being cast into the *Earth*, there to become a *Feast* for *Worms* to feed upon. But be not *troubled* at this, O *Believing Soul* ; for this *seeming Destruction* of thy *Body* shall not be *Eternal*, though it *fall* into the *Grave* by *Death*, where it *seems* at present to be *lost* and *forgotten*, yet shall it have a certain *Resurrection*, and then the *Ignominy* and *Disgrace* under which it lay in the *Grave* shall *appear*, not to have been so great, as its *Resurrection* out of it shall *appear Glorious* : for it is sown in *Corruption*, but it is raised in *Incorruption* ; it is Sown in *dishonour*, but it is raised in *Glory* ; it is Sown in *weakness*, it is raised in *Power* ; it is Sown a *Natural Body*, it is raised a *Spiritual Body*, in 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43. Fear not therefore O *Believing Soul*, but commit thy *Body* with *Confidence* unto the *Earth*, and let thy *Heart* *rejoyce*, let thy *Tongue* be *glad*, and let thy *Flesh* rest in the *hopes* of a *blessed Resurrection* ; for assure thy self thy *Body* shall not always lie rotting in the *Grave*, neither shall it there.

see

see Corruption for ever ; but there shall come a time, when God shall shew it the path of Life again ; when thy Soul shall descend from Heaven to assume its new raised body out of the Grave, to become a most glorious Body, even like unto the glorious Body of Jesus Christ, being made more spiritual, and so more suitable to the Nature and Operations of the Soul, that it may become a fit Partner with it, in the Blessedness and Happiness of Heaven for evermore.

Fourthly, Consider the Familiarity that Believers have expressed towards Death. Ordinarily indeed Men put death into such ugly shapes, and represent it to themselves under such terrible and affrighting forms, that they pass their lives under slavery and bondage through the fears of it all their days. The visage of Death appears so grim and full of horreur to the minds of some, that the serious forethoughts of it, seem to them to be a tormenting them before their time. O how vastly different are the thoughts of a wicked and a godly man concerning Death and the Grave ! the one looks upon death as full of Dread and Horreur, the other looks upon it as a Messenger of Peace and Joy ; and how can it be otherwise ? For to the wicked it comes as a dreadful Enemy, armed with the wrath of an angry God, which burns to the lowest Hell : But to the Godly, it comes as a peaceable, loving Friend, sent with Tidings of Peace and Reconciliation, from him who is the God of Peace and Love. Natural fear of Death in a wicked Man is great ; but when natural fear is encreased by guilt lying upon the Conscience, and staring a Sinner in the face ; Oh what dismal Horreur and Confusion must seize upon such a Soul under the Apprehensions of Death ? Well may such a one look upon the Grave as a Dungeon, and Death

as *Hell* it self, an *awakened Conscience* representing to his view nothing but the *Fiends* and *Furies* of that *Infernal Pit*, that wait to be the *Executioners* of the *Wrath* and *Vengeance* of the great *God* upon him, in the *Woes* and *Miseries* of *everlasting Burnings*. Who wonders therefore to hear such an one crying out upon a *Death-bed* with *Horreur* and *Anguish* of *Soul*, Oh I am so *sick* I cannot *live*, and yet I am so *sinful* I dare not *die*, and yet *die* I must ! Oh would to *God*, that the *serious Thoughts* of these things might be laid to heart by all *profane Sinners* ? What a happy means might it possibly be, to prevent the *Horrors* and *Consternation* of *Soul* in many upon a *Death-bed* ? But if *Sinners* cannot bear the *Thoughts* of these things in their *Minds* now, for fear of *Distraction* ; how will they bear the sight and presence of them then ? If the *thinking* and *speaking* of them now be *dreadful*, the feeling of them will be far more tormenting.

But now a *godly Man* thinks and speaks of death after another manner ; for if he thinks and speaks of death as a *godly Man* may and ought to do ; he is so far from being terrified with the thoughts of it, that he thinks of it comfortably, speaks of it familiarly. As it was wont to be the speech of a very *Holy Person*, now with *God*, who was pretty well stricken in years, I hope it will not be long before I shall be in *Heaven* ; for few live above sixty or seventy years, and I am now a good many above fifty ; certainly therefore it cannot be long before I shall die : Thus this *Holy Soul*, being desirous of death, did use delightfully to reckon how little time there was to pass between it and *Heaven*, and with a holy longing of *Soul* reaching after death, as one that was troubled that it was so long a coming. Thus certainly did holy *Job* look upon death, not as an *Enemy*, nor yet barely as a *Stranger* ; but as one of his *Friends*, whom he was well acquainted with, took

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took a kind of *Delight* and *Contentment* in it : See with what an unusual, but yet *sweet* and *familiar* manner, he *salutes* and *welcomes death*, and all its *Retinue*, in *Job* 17. 14. *I have said to Corruption, thou art my Father; and to the Worm, thou art my Mother and Sister.* The *Holy Man* makes no more of *Death* and the *Grave*, than as if he were going to be *embraced* by a *compassionate Father*, or a *tender-hearted Mother*, or *Sister*, whose *Bowels* were full of *love* and *pity* to him. Thus *St. Paul* also speaks of *Death*, as that which he was *daily familiar* with, being in *Deaths* often, frequently thinking thereof; for said he, *I die daily*; *Thoughts* of *Death* was that which he *accustomed* himself unto, and that was one *Cause* why he was so *willing* to *embrace* it. And thus it should be with all of us, were our hearts rightly *affected*, and we so *familiarly acquainted* with *death* as we ought : Those of us who have the most *lively Faith*, would not only, not be *afraid* of *death*, but we should even *court* it, as that which is *better* than *life*.

But I would not here *discourage* any *weak Believer*; for I dare not say, that they are no *true Believers*, who are not come up to this *frame* of *Soul*. Though it is true *Grace* is the same in all *Believers*, one *Believer* hath the same that another *Believer* hath; yet all that are *Believers* do not attain to the same *degrees* of *Grace*. There are some, and it is their *sin*, and ought to be their *Humiliation*, that *Death* and they are *little acquainted*, they *seldom* descend into the *Grave* by frequent *Meditations* of their *Mortality*, they look not into the *Pit* out of which at first they were *taken*, and *into* which they are shortly to *return*; now their *comfort*, in the thoughts of *death* is *little*, if any at all, because *death* and they are such *Strangers* to one another : These may be *true Believers*, but they are *weak* and

and faulty. But now others there are, who are so advanced in Grace above their Brethren, that by a constant Familiarity with death, are so composed in their Spirits, that they fear it not, nay they rejoice in the thoughts of it; not because they think they shall not taste of death, for they know that death will overtake them as well as others; they are sensible that the time of their departure draws nearer and nearer daily: These things they believe, but they do not afflict themselves therewith, so well are they acquainted with death, both in the Nature and in the Effects of it. And were they to die presently, this would not much trouble them; for they know the bitterness of death is past, though death it self be not; the Gall and the Wormwood is taken out, Christ hath been there before them; and therefore the sting of death which is sin is gone, the dangers, yea and the difficulties also in dying are removed out of the way: This they believe, and therefore they are not afraid, though by death they descend through the Grave into Heaven; for their Jesus, their Saviour is there; and they know that till they die, where he is they cannot be; wherefore they say, though we die, nay therefore will we die, that we may see him.

Wouldst thou therefore, O weak Believer, attain unto this sweet frame of Spirit, accustom thy self then to a holy familiarity with death, conceive of it under the fairest and easiest Notions; this is that the Spirit of God in Scripture delights in; when it speaks of death with respect to the People of God, it always makes use of the most comfortable Expressions to represent it to them by. So sweetly is death enamell'd, and so richly is it clothed in the holy Language, that it seems to have a kind of Lustre and Beauty upon it, to draw the Hearts and Affections of Believers to be desirous of it. Look a little there-
fore,

fore, O Believer, into the *Sacred Oracles*, and see how the *Spirit of God* teacheth us to *cloath Death* with delightful *Expressions*; sometimes it is called an *undressing* or *uncloathing*: And what Man that hath worn a *Suit of Cloaths* till it is become *filthy* and *nasty*, would not be glad to put off his old *filthy Garments*, that he might put on *Change of Raiment*? And why should not a *Christian* be willing to lay down the *Earthly House* of his *Tabernacle*, though it be in the *Dust of the Grave*, that he may be *cloathed upon* with his *House* which is from *Heaven*? Sometimes *Death* is compared to *Rest*; they shall *rest* in their *Beds*, says the *Prophet*: and *Job* speaking of the *state of Man in death*, tells us, *there the weary are at rest*. Now when a Man hath wrought hard, and taken great *pains* and *labour* all the *Day*, how desirous is he to go to *Bed* and take his *Rest*? And is not *Death* the same to thee, O *Christian*? Doth not the *Spirit of God* call it so! *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours*. And surely there is no *rest* like to that *rest* that a *Christian* obtains after his *spiritual labours* and *conflicts* with *Sin*, *Satan*, the *World*, and his own *evil Heart*; when the *Soul* is set free from the *Body*, and takes its *flight* at once from all these into the *Bosom of God*, that place of *Rest* and *Happiness* which remains for the *People of God*. As there is no *Yoke* like unto the *Yoke of Christ*, when a *Christian* suffers for him, for it is a *Yoke lined with Love*; *My Yoke*, says he, *is easie, and my Burthen is light*. So there is no *Rest* and *Happiness* like that which is with *Christ*; for the same *Happiness* that he enjoys, his *Children* and *Servants* enjoy also. Sometimes *death* is called a *Sleep*; so says our *Lord*, our *Friend Lazarus* *sleepeth*, it is spoken of his *death*; now who of us, when the *day* is spent, and the *night* hath overtaken us, is afraid to go to *bed* and *sleep*?

And

And why then should a *Christian*, when his *Days* are finished, and the *Night of Sickness* is come upon him, be afraid to fall asleep, though he sleep the sleep of *Death*? By such *Considerations* as these, and the like, that the *Scripture* holds forth to us, *Christians* should endeavour to allay the bitterness, beautifie the deformity, blunt the edge, and take out the sting of death; that all hard thoughts of it might be buried, and instead thereof there might grow up a *sweet Familiarity* and *Acquaintance* between them and death; Oh how would this facilitate the work of dying, and cause holy Souls to exult with joy and rejoicing when death is approaching towards them.

And here I cannot but make a little *Digression* to reason the Case with some weak *Believers*, whose unwillingness to die is very great, because their fears of death are so many. But why should the fears of Death so amaze and terrifie thee, O weak Believer? Hast thou not the same Grace in thee with others? Hast thou not the same Faith, the same Hope, the same Love, acting and working in thee? Dost thou not serve the same Lord? Hast thou not the same God for thy Father, the same Jesus for thy Saviour, the same Spirit of Consolation for thy Comforter? Art thou not going to the same Heaven? nay art thou not going to the same Heaven, in the same way, that all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints of God in all Ages have gone before thee? Death was the Gate through which they all entred into Heaven; and why then shouldst thou be so unwilling to go to Heaven in the same way? Oh how unlike to *Christians* do they shew themselves, who are so loath to die, that they will not come, but must be dragg'd to the Grave, yea to the very thoughts of Death? Oh how unsuitable is this Temper to those who desire that God's Wills may be done, who

pre-

profess themselves to be Strangers and Pilgrims here upon Earth, and to look upon Heaven as their Country and their Fathers House? The life of a Christian should be a life of Faith; now the Excellency of the Life of Faith in a Believer with relation unto Death, lies in this, that it makes him not only submissive, but chearfully to come to that to which another must be dragged by force, I mean Death and the Grave. To a Believer, when his Faith is on the wing, Life (as St. Paul says of his) is not dear, and Death, (as he speaks of his) is desired. It was as hard to make St. Paul patient, when he thought of living, as to make another patient, when he thinks of dying; a most sweet and Blessed Frame of Spirit, but where is it to be found now? how rarely is it to be seen? the most of Men, shall I say, nay, the most of Professors; and would to God there were not just cause to complain and say, whom we hope are real Christians, their Hearts and Affections are so much set upon the World, even as if their Portion were not in Heaven, but they themselves were among the Number of those whose Names are written in the Earth. The Lord humble us, that so much of this Evil frame of Spirit is to be seen in the best of God's Children; as appears by their backwardness and unwillingness to die. O Christians, if Jesus Christ had gone as unwillingly to Suffer and to Die for us; as we go to Pray to him, and to hear from him, not to say as unwillingly as we go to die, that we may enjoy him, what had become of our Salvation? but blessed be God he did not. And surely Christians, if it was Christs desire to die for us as it was, it should then be our longing to live with him, though it be by Dying. Oh what a strange unseemly and unbecoming thing is it, for a Christian to hear his Saviour crying out, I have a Baptism to

be baptized withal, though it was the Baptism of his bloody Death and Sufferings, and oh, how am I straitned till it be accomplished? And that a Christian, reflecting upon the thoughts of his own Death, should say, I have a Baptism to be baptized withal, though not a Baptism of a bloody Death, by the hands of Violence; but the Baptism of an easie, quiet, and peaceable Death; and how am I straitned and full of fears lest it should be accomplished? Certainly Christians, a willingness in Christ to die for us, that we might live by him, should cause in us a willingness to die that we might live with him.

Would to God, O Christian Reader, that what hath been said, might be a means to work in my self and thee, not only a readiness and fitness for Death, though that is very good, and that in which the safety of a Christian lies; and happy are they that have gone so far, for Heaven is sure to them whether they know it or not: but Oh that we might go further, that Grace might attain to a greater Perfection in us, even that we might come to a Holy willingness and desire, yea to a Holy longing of Soul after Death. This is that Holy covetousness of Soul that God allows of. There are two things wherein a Christian cannot be too insatiable in his desires after them, one is, that he may Honour God, the other is, that he may enjoy God; that he may honour God as much as he can while he is on Earth, and that he may enjoy God as soon as it may be in Heaven; this is the most commendable and desirable life, and this will end in the most Happy and Comfortable Death. Death did I say, nay it is Life in Death; it is Death swallowed up of Life, even in a Life of unconceivable Glory and Happiness, in the enjoyment of that God who is all Life, all Love, all Peace, all Joy, and all Happiness, in the utmost and highest Perfection,

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I am sensible I have made a *Digression* in this particular, but the *desire* I had, *Christian Reader*, to stir up my *own Soul* and thine also, unto a *Duty* so full of *Sweetness* and *Delight*, hath put me upon it. I now go on to what yet remains.

Having laid down some *Consolations* against the fear of *Death* in general; I shall in the next place endeavour to propound some *Considerations* for the support of *Christians* under the loss of *Friends* and *Relations* in particular, which unto many is a *severe Trial*, and hard to be *born*: for it is as common for *Christians* to exceed in their Grief for their *dead Friends* and *Relations*, as it is to exceed in their *Love* and *Delight* in their *living Friends* and *Relations*; and in both it is very hard for *Christians* to keep their *Passions* and *Affections* within due bounds. The blessed *Apostle* therefore gives us *Excellent Counsel* how we should carry our selves under the enjoyment of *Relations* and outward *Comforts* whilst we have them; and how we should bear up under the loss of them, when *God* takes them away from us; we have the *Direction* for both, 1 Cor. 7. 29. If we have *Relations* or *Worldly Enjoyments*, why then, saith he, *Rejoyce in them as if you rejoyced not*. If you want them, or have lost them, then, says he, *weep for them as if you wept not*: and he lays down a very cogent reason for what he says; for the *time* is *short* and the *World* is *passing away*, and so are you and all your *Relations* and *Comforts* passing away with it. As if the *Apostle* had said, if *God* hath *Blessed* you with *dear* and *sweet Relations*, with *pleasant* and *delightful Comforts*; yet consider it is but a little time that you shall enjoy them; they and you shall quickly *part* again, therefore *rejoyce* in them as if you *rejoyced* not. And if *God* hath seen good to take away those *sweet Pledges* of his *Love*, and once the *Objects* of your

Delight and Joy, do not much *Afflict* your selves under the *loss* of them ; for it is but a *little while* that you shall *continue* here without them, the *time* is *short*, and the *World* is *passing* away, and ere long it will not be ; yea, you your selves are *passing* away with it, yea *before* it also ; *weep* therefore as if you wept not : these things are not your *great Concerns*, your *Happiness* lies not in the *Enjoyment* of them, nor your *Misery* in the *loss* of them ; but it lies in something *higher*, and of greater *Worth* and *Excellency*, even in *God himself* ; it's the *Enjoyment* of him only that can make a *Soul happy*, and the *loss* of him only that can make it *miserable*. Therefore with a *Holy Moderation* and *Indifferency* of *Affection*, carry your selves continually in every condition.

Now before I proceed to lay down *particular Consolatory Directions* for the support of *Christians* under the *loss* of *Friends* and *Relations*, I must here put in a *double caution* which *Christians* must carefully observe. The one is, that they *despise* not the *Chastening* of the *Lord* ; the other is, that they *faint* not under them : these are two *extreams*, the *Apostle* exhorts *Christians* to be aware of, and they are both comprehended in *Hebrews* 12. 5. *My Son despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art Rebuked of him.* When *God* lays his *Correcting hand* upon us, for any to be so *bold* as to say, they do not *regard* it, let *God* take all if he will ; must my *Estate* go ? I care not if it doth ; will *God* take away my *Children* or *Relations*, let them *die* ; thus to make light of the *hand* of *God*, is to *despise* the *Chastening* of the *Lord*, and *God* will not long *bear* it, nor with us for it. But then there is another *Extream* that we must take heed of under *Affliction*, and that is *fainting* ; If when *Goods* are taken away, the *Hearts* of those that

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that enjoy them are taken away also, and they sink into *despondency* and *distrust*. If when *Children die* the *Spirits of Parents die* too, this is *fainting* under the *Rod*. A *Christian* now must walk in the middle way between both these *Extreams*, neither carelessly to *despise*, nor *despairingly* to *faint* under the *Chastisements* of the *Lord*.

But though *Christians* must neither *despise* the hand of *God* when it is lifted up against them, nor yet *faint* under it, yet they ought to be *sensible* of it; for it is a most *unbecoming temper* in any *Christian* not to tremble when *God* smites him. *Weep* and *Mourn* we may under *Affliction*; *God* allows *Tears* to flow from our *Eyes*, and *Sorrow* in our *Hearts* under the *loss* of *Friends* and *Relations*. *Grief* in such cases doubtless is very *Lawful*. To be without *Natural Affections* is a *Heathenish* *sin*. *Rom. 1. 29.* It is our *Duty* to take notice of every *twig* of *God's Rod*. Not to be troubled when the hand of *God* hath made a *breach* upon us is our *sin*. To be above *Passions* is the *Happiness* of *Heaven*, and to rectifie *Passions*, is much of our *Happiness* on *Earth*. To be without *Natural Affections*, is to be below a *Man*, but to *Order* and *Manage* them aright, is the *Perfection* of a *Christian*.

Having premised this, I now proceed to lay down some *Consolatory Directions* for the support of *Christians*, under the *loss* of *Friends* and *Relations*, which may be very useful also in the undergoing any other *Affliction* whatsoever; and I shall reduce them all unto these particular heads, as some *Considerations* relating unto *God* the *Author* of our *Afflictions*. Some relating to our *selves* that are the *Subjects* of *Afflictions*. And some relating to the *Afflictions* themselves. First, some *Considerations* relating unto *God* the *Author* of our *Afflictions*, And here consider,

First, God hath more right to and in all our Friends, and Relations than we our selves have. He is Lord of all, so great is his Dominion and Sovereignty over all, that what he can do by Might, he may do by Right. He is not accountable unto any, as we are, nor is he tied by any Rule or Law, but his own Will in any of his Actings: And therefore if God take away any of our Friends and Relations, it is no more than what he may do; and if God do no more than what he may do, who are we that we should Complain? When God gives us Relations or Comforts for our use and benefit, he still keeps the right to them in his own hands, and when he lets us have the Possession of them for a time, he keeps the Propriety to himself. If God gives us Comforts it is an Act of Bounty, but when he takes them away it is an Act of Justice; for he is a Sovereign Lord in both. God cannot injure his Creatures; his Sovereignty and Supremacy is enough to bear him out, whatever he doth with or to them. Hast thou lost a dear Husband, a loving Wife, or a dutiful Child? Let that Right God hath in them, and the Sovereignty he hath over thee and them, quiet thy Spirit under all. It was so with David, Psal. 39. 2. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou, Lord, didst it.

Secondly, Consider whatever dear Relations God hath taken from thee, he is able to make thee a Recompence with great advantage, and that in the same kind, if he see it good for thee. Say not therefore concerning thy dead Friends and Relations; what shall I do for those sweet Refreshments, and those Comfortable Delights, that once I enjoyed in them, but Death hath now spoiled me of all; for God is able to give thee much more, than what was in all these. God is not as Isaac that had but one Blessing.

Blessing. Our Heavenly Father hath all *Blessings* at his *Command*: what a sweet *Title* is that which the *Apostle* gives unto *God* for the *Comfort* of all *Believers*, 2 Cor. 1. 3. *The Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort and Consolation.* Friends, Relations with all the *Comforts* and *Delights* belonging to them, are at his *Command*, and he can *speak* them into *being* for your *Support* and *Comfort* when he *pleaseth*. If *God* take away a *Mercy* from any of his *People*, usually he gives them another in the *room* of it, and many times a *better*. *God* smote *David's Child* begotten in *Adultery*, and *David* *Fasts* and *Prays* for the *life* of it, and notwithstanding this, the *Child* *died*: but in a little time *God* gave him another, a *Solomon*, a *Jedidiah* one that was *beloved* of the *Lord*, in his *stead*. *God* bestows many *comfortable Enjoyments* upon his *People* in their *passage* through this *World*, to some he gives *dear Relations*, to others he gives *Estates*, to some abundance of *Health*, to others *faithful* and *loving Friends*: now these *Comforts*, are to *continue* but for a *while*; and those of them that *last longest*, will *consume* away at length: and when these *Comforts* are taken away, it seems to be a *time* of *darkness* and *sadness* with the *People* of *God*; but if their *Faith* be *active* and *vigorous*, they may *support* themselves with this, that *God* doth not use to be long *wanting* to the *Comfort* of his *People* that *wait* for him: *David* tells us as much, *Psal.* 18. 8. *Thou Lord wilt light my Candle, the Lord my God shall enlighten my darkness*

Thirdly, Consider this, doth *God* deny thee, or hath he taken from thee some *Comforts* which thou countest as great as any thou canst enjoy as to outward *Blessings*, yet hath he left thee many still, and he hath far better to bestow upon thee, even such

between which and them there is no comparison. It may be thou wantest Posterity to bear up thy Name, when thou art dead and gone, and thou criest out with Abraham, Lord what wilt thou give me seeing I go Childless. Is this thy Case, O Christian? why then consider, as you have not the Comfort of enjoying of Children, so you have not the Care and Trouble of Educating and bringing them up, nor the Grief and Vexation of their wicked lives, and sometimes more wicked and untimely deaths; which is a constant trouble of Soul unto many; which made a Holy Man once mournfully complain and say, It is better to weep for ten dead Children, than for one living Child. Little do you know what a continual grief of Spirit and a constant aking of heart, some Children are unto their Parents. What a heart wounding was it to David, when he cries 2 Samuel 16. 11. Behold my Son which came out of my Bowels, seeketh my life. Oh how many Children are there to whom the lives of their Parents are a burthen? who instead of Praying to God their Heavenly Father for their Parents, not only think and wish it in their Hearts, but among their Profane Companions are not ashamed to speak it with their Tongues, as I have heard of some, wickedly and impiously desiring that they could invert that Petition of the Lord's Prayer, and say of their Earthly Fathers what others say of their Heavenly Father, Our Father which art in Heaven, longing for the Expiration of the life of those who under God were the Instruments of conveying life unto them. Oh to what a height of Impiety are such vile wretched Monsters come, for they deserve not the Name of Children, who cannot be content to stay till God takes away their Parents from them, but would themselves bury them as it were alive. And let not any such think lightly to pass over their

their Sin, by saying, Why, we *wish* them no ill, what hurt is it to *wish* them in Heaven, they cannot be in a *better place*? It is true they cannot; but this doth not excuse their *wickedness*, for doubtless it is not so much their *Parents Happiness* in Heaven that they *desire*, as that they might *enjoy* their *Estates* here upon *Earth*. But let all such *wicked Wretches* know, that God will be sure to meet with them *here* or *hereafter*: And if the *Blessing* of long *Life* be promised unto those that *honour* their *Parents*, those then that *desire* the *Death* of their *Parents*, shall have cause to fear their *lives* may be *shortened*; for surely of such *wicked*, (I had almost said) *blood-thirsty Wretches*, it may be *truly said*, that they shall not *live* out *half* their *days*. But this by the way.

But this is not my *Case*, may some say, God hath not *denied* me *Children* or *Relations*, but he hath *taken* many of them *from me*, and such who were *very delightful* to me, and this doth much trouble me. But though God hath *taken some* from you, yet hath he not left you *more* than he hath *taken*? so it is sometimes: But yet it *frequently happens*, that if God removes away *one mercy* from us, presently we are *so cast down*, as if all our *Enjoyments* were gone; and we mourn so *excessively* that we are become so *blind*, that we cannot behold the *Mercies* God hath left us, for the *want* of what he hath *taken* from us. But why, O *Christian*, art thou so *unthankful* to God, and so *unkind* to thy self, as to lose the *Comfort* of all the *other Mercies* thou *enjoyest*, because God hath taken away *one Mercy* that thou *wantest*. Oh vile *Ingratitude*, how many thousands are there, as good shall I say, nay *better* than you, whose *whole Harvest* of *Comforts* in this *World*, is not a *handful* to the *gleaning* of those *Comforts* you still enjoy; who in all their *Lives*

never were *Owners* of such comfortable *Enjoyments* as you now *over-look* in your *grief* and *trouble*, if not in your *discontent*. But what dost thou mean, O *Christian*, by all this? What are the *Mercies* God hath left thee in possession, nothing worth? The *Grave* hath swallowed up a *Child*, *Death* hath snatch'd away a *Friend*; but still thou hast a *Husband*, it may be, or a *Wife*, or *Children*; or if God hath stripp'd thee of all these, yet he hath left thee a comfortable *Estate* to live upon, with *health* and *strength* to use and enjoy it; or if this be gone also, have you not the *Gospel*, the *Ordinances* of God; and if thou art a *Believer*, thou hast an *Interest* in *Christ*, and in the *Covenant* of *Grace*, and a *Right* and *Title* to all the *Priviledges* belonging to that *Covenant*, as *Pardon* of *Sin*, *Peace* of *Conscience*, and *Hopes* of *eternal Life*? And what dost thou faint and sink, as if all thy *Comforts* in this *World*, and all thy *Hopes* of the *World* to come were *dead* and *buried* in one *Grave* together? Beware of this, O ye *mourning*, *afflicted ones*; for the *Sin* is great, and so is the *Danger* that attends it, as might be shew'd at large; but I forbear. Yet before I leave this Head, I shall add one thing more. You who have lost the *delight* of your *Eyes*, and the *joy* of your *hearts*, as to *outward Comforts*; yet remember God hath far better to bestow upon you, even such as transcend the love of *Parents*, or the joy of *Children*; I confess a dear *Husband*, a loving *Wife*, a beloved *Child*, an affectionate *Friend*, these are very great things when they stand by other *Comforts* and *Enjoyments*; but, Oh! what poor, little, small things; nay nothings are they, when God shall set himself by them, before a gracious *Soul*? And now that God is taking away these *earthly Comforts*, who can tell, but that hereby he is making way for himself the *King* of *Glorious* to come into

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into such a *Soul*, to *communicate* of *himself* and his *Grace*, in a more *sweet* and *sensible* way and manner than ever he hath done. And, as *one saith*, the *Death* of *Children*, *Relations*, and *Friends*, these *dark* and *uncomfortable* *Providences* must *cast up* and *prepare the way* of the *Lord*, removing them out of the *heart*, that *himself* may dwell there alone.

Fourthly, Under your Tears and Sorrows in the loss of Friends and Relations, consider, *What wrong hath God done you by your Afflictions, that you so mourn and complain?* God hath taken from you a dear *Relation*, from whom you expected much *Comfort*; but God had a greater *Interest* in your *Relation*, than you had, for all *Souls* are *his*; and will you *dispute* with him? Who had most *Right* to dispose of your *Relations*, God or you? Your *Relation*, though never so dear to you, was the *work* of his *hands*; and what, may not God do what he will with his *own*? Suppose the *Relation* thou hast lost, was a *beloved Child*, that you *nourished* and *bred up*, and that with great pains and care, God hath paid you *sufficiently* for it, in the *Loan* of your *Child* so long; and now that your *Child* is come to *full age*, and to the *Time appointed* of the *Father*, may he not take it home unto himself? Did you, or could you *provide* better for your *Child* than God can? God gave your *Child* *Life* and *Breath* while it was with you, that it might be a *Comfort* to you, and you enjoyed it longer than you deserved, or than he *promised* you; and now that he is come and *claims* his *Interest* in it, it is but a *fitting* and *becoming* thing that you should *sit still* and be *satisfied* in his *Will*.

Secondly, Consider some Arguments in reference to *our selves*, for the moderating of our *Griefs* and *Sorrows* under the *loss* of *Friends* and *Relations*: And here consider,

First, *Who or what are we, that we should be discontented or repine at the dealings of the all-wise God with us?* Alas, if we reflect upon our *Original*, what is it? *Dust* and *Asbes*, and out of thence formed by God to be his *Creatures*; for it is he that *bath made us, and not we our selves*; and this shews our *weakness* and *impotency*: But this is not all, we are not only God's *Creatures*, made by him, and depending upon him; but we are *sinful Creatures* that have *rebelled* against him; the *Posterity* of *Sinful* and *Apostate Parents*, that have *lost* our *Primitive Beauty* and *Excellency*, whereby we did *bear the Image* and *Resemblance* of God in *Holiness*, which is the *Glory* of God himself; and are run in *Debt* unto his *Justice*, more than *we* or all the *Men* on *Earth*; yea, or all the *Saints* and *Angels* in *Heaven* are able to *pay*. This God to whom we thus stand *indebted*, is become our great *Benefactor*, gives us all we *enjoy*, maintains us continually at his own proper *Cost* and *Charges*; for we have nothing but what we *receive* from Him; it is his *Corn* and *Wine* that *feeds* and *nourisheth* us, his *Wool* and *Flax* that *covers* our *Nakedness*; his *Silver* and *Gold* that *enricheth* us, *Hos.* 2. 8, 9. He *fram'd* us and *fashion'd* us in the *Womb*, and gave us all the *Limbs* and *Parts* of our *Bodies*, so that we were *born* neither *maimed* nor *monstrous*; he *endued* us with *Reason* and *Understanding*; it is he that is the God of our *Health* and *Strength*; our *Peace*, our *Plenty*, flow from his *Bounty* and *Goodness* to us: yea, our very *Lives* and *Beings* are from him, *for in him, we live and move, and have our*

our Beings. We are but *Worms*, and if he tread upon any of us, he leaves us dead behind him. So infinitely below him are we, that if we do that which is good, we cannot benefit him; and if we will venture upon that which is evil, we cannot hurt him. Now the Contention is between this great and mighty, yea Almighty God, the Creator and Governour of all Things and Persons, and us poor, low, sinful Dust and Ashes, who shall have their Wills in the disposing of our Friends and Relations, but his own Creatures, whether God's Will shall stand or ours: We may pretend what we will to excuse our selves; but the plain Truth of things lies in this Contest, whose will shall take place, Gods, or ours; whether he, or we shall have the disposing of our selves and ours: But it is in vain to contend with him; for as he will, so it is fitting he should do with us and ours as he pleaseth, whether we will or no. What saith Eliahu, *Jeb 34. 33.* Should it be according to our Minds, he will recompence, whether we refuse, or whether we chuse. There is no good to be got by contending with one that is so infinitely above us; our wisest way is to be dumb and hold our Peace when God pleads with us by any Affliction. Doth not God do all things well? Do we not all stand amazed at that infinite Wisdom, by which the Heavens and Earth, and all the Creatures in both were made, and by which they are all governed and disposed? Doubtless there is nothing amiss in his Administrations; he cannot be subject to any Error, who is Wisdom it self; all his Works are perfect and good? Who dare pretend to find fault with what God doth: Shall mortal Man be more wise than his Maker? Have you lost sweet and lovely Children, or dear Take-fellows? Lay your hands upon your Mouths, be not discontented, but acquiesce in what God hath done, for he always doth what is

best for his; at present they cannot see it, it may be, but they shall do hereafter; and in the *mean time* it is their *Duty* to believe and to trust in him. It is not for us to have the *Keys* of *Life* and *Death* to hang at our *Girdle*, to let in and out at our *Pleasure*; *Heaven* then would be empty enough, for our *Friends* should not go yet if we could help it; and our *Enemies* should never come there if we could hinder them. Our *Relations* would then live too long, and our *Enemies* would die too soon. But these things whatever we say or think to the contrary, are ruled by an *All-wise Providence*, to which we our selves and all our *Relations* are subjected: And it will never be well with us, till we can resign up our selves, our *Relations*, and all our *Comforts* unto his wise disposal, and say not our *Will*, but thy *Will*, O Lord, be done.

Secondly, Consider, your weeping and mourning for the loss of your *Friends* and *Relations*, is but a vain, vexatious thing; it is that which will do you no good, but may do you much hurt. If a *Bullock* have the *Yoke* fastened upon him, he may by struggling and striving make his *Yoke* gaul and vex him, but it doth not ease him at all thereby. The Case is so with thee, O *Christian*, God hath afflicted thee sorely, by taking away thy *Yoke-fellow*, or thy *Child*; if thou wilt not bear it patiently, but frettest and murmurest against God, all that thou gettest hereby, is the more pain and smart, but thou dost not help or ease thy self in the least: What our Lord saith of our caring for the things of this life, is true in grieving for the losses we sustain in this life; Which of you, says he, by taking thought, can add one Cubit to his Stature? Matth. 6. 27. Cares may break our hearts, and shorten our days, but they cannot add to our Stature: So Sorrows
under

under losses may break our Rest, and rend our hearts; yea, they may halten our death; for worldly Sorrow causeth death, but it cannot repair our losses nor help us under them. When the Hand of God is upon any of our Relations, by Sickneses and Distempers, and the purpose of God in reference unto their Death is unknown to us. There is now room for Fasting and Prayer, that the Evil threatned and feared may not come upon us; Tears and Cries unto God now have the nature and use of means to prevent an Affliction from coming upon us: But when once the purpose of God is manifested, and the fatal stroke is given, it is the vainest thing in the World to fret and vex our selves because our Relations are dead. Holy David therefore, when God had smitten his Child with Sicknes, being desirous of its life, he betakes himself to Fasting and Prayer unto God, 2 Sam. 12. and 22. For, says he, *who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the Child may live.* But when once God had signified his Will in the Death of the Child; now, says he, that it is dead, *wherefore should I fast?* It is in vain for me to fast and pray now, *Can I bring it back again?* No, I cannot. *I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me.* But this is not all; our mourning and weeping for our departed Friends and Relations is not only in vain, that is, it doth us no good, but it many times doth much hurt; for God is not glorified, but dishonoured by our repining at his Providence; but we our selves also are injured, for hereby we are rendred unfit for his Service, both in our general and particular Callings, as we are Men, and much more as we are Christians. Cast not therefore away your Tears and Sorrows upon that which will not benefit you, but be to your loss and damage. Turn the stream of your Tears into a right Chancel, there is use enough for them, even for

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for your *living*, and it may be *lively Sins*, and not
for your *dead Relations*.

Thirdly, You that are so prone to *grieve* and
mourn under the *loss* of your *Relations*, consider
you your selves are making haste after them. You
are almost *ready* to go off the *Stage* of this *World*,
and would you have your *Relations* live? It is not
likely that we shall bear them *Company* long here;
when a *few days* more are *past* and *gone*, we our
selves shall go *whence we shall not return*. It is
but a little while, and our *Places* and *Relations*
that have known us here, shall *know* us again no more
for ever. We are marching on, not *fair* and *softly*,
but very *swiftly* in the same *Road* wherein our *dead*
and *lamented Friends* and *Relations* once *walked*,
treading out the *marks* of their *Foot-steps* while they
lived here. We are almost ready to *lie down* and
rot with them in the same *Grave*; we dwell in
Houses of *Clay* which begin to *crack*; and though
we make a shift to *daub* and *patch* them up for a
while, yet will they soon *tumble* down into the
Dust, do what we can. Your *dead Relations*, that
you are now *mourning* for, are gone but a little be-
fore you, and you will *soon* be with them; as you
come not into the *World* together, so you must not
go out together; it is *God's Will* it should be so, and
who can *resist* it? Nay, it is *God's Will* it should be
so, and we must *acquiesce* in it; for if we love
God, we must *deny* him nothing that he *requires*;
and if we *deny* not our selves in our *dearest Rela-*
tions for him, we cannot be his *Disciples*.

Thirdly, I shall now lay down some *consolatory*
Considerations, in reference to the *Affliction* it self,
that any *lie* under by reason of the *loss* of *Friends*
and *Relations*. And here consider,

First, *There must be a time when you and your*
Relations

Relations must part, and why not now? It is fit we should wait upon God for the bestowing of a Mercy, and that we should be Patient when God takes away a Mercy; but it is not fit we should know or choose the times when God will give a Mercy, or when he will take it away. Every thing is Beautiful in its Season, says the Wise Man, and God knows when is the best time for us both to enjoy a Mercy and to be Exercised with an Affliction. He is infinite in Wisdom and cannot be guilty of any mistake in any kind whatever. Now this All-knowing Infinitely Wise God thinks this the best time for thee to be without thy Child, to want thy Relations; thou canst not at present see and understand the Work of God, and that this Affliction that is now come upon thee, is come in the best and fittest time and Season. I may here say to you what Christ did to Peter, when he was going to wash his Feet, John 13. 7. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. So say I, what God is now doing with thee, and what he intends by this Affliction thou knowest not now, but thou mayest know hereafter, and be able to say, not only that it was good for thee that thou wert Afflicted but that it was good for thee that at such a time and in such a manner thou wert Afflicted, by the loss of such a Child, or such a Relation, God hereby Sanctifying the Affliction, not only for thy Conviction of, and Humiliation for sin, the Evil whereof thou never wert acquainted with before; but for the discovery of himself in Jesus Christ, and the Excellency and Beauty of Grace and Holiness unto thy Soul, both which thou wert a Stranger to as to any Sanctifying and saving knowledge of them; whereby much sin from that time hath been prevented in thee, and much Comfort in the ways of Holiness and Obedience from that time hath been experienced by thee. Let God therefore

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therefore for the *time* to come have not only the *sorting* of thy *Mercies* and thy *Afflictions*; that is, to *bestow* what *Mercies* he thinks best, on thee, or what *Afflictions* he thinks *meet* upon thee, as to the *kind* of them; but let him also have the *timing* of our *Mercies* and of our *Afflictions*, that is, when is the *fittest time* for us to *enjoy Mercies*, and when is the *fittest time* for us to be without them: for certainly he that is the *Lord of Time* is the best *Judge of Time*; and in nothing do we more discover our *Folly* and *Raskness*, than in presuming to fix the times, either of our *Mercies*, or of our *Afflictions*. Leave therefore, O *Christian*, the *timing* both of the one and of the other unto him, whose *Works* are all *Beautiful* in their *Season*.

Secondly, Consider you that grieve so under the loss of *Friends* and *Relations*, your *Condition* might have been worse. Others have felt more, and you *deserve worse*. You have lost a *beloved Child*, or a *dear Friend* and *Relation*, and you *Mourn* as one that will not be *Comforted*; but what is your *loss* unto others? *Aaron* lost *two Sons* at one time, and that by a *strange Judgment* from *God*, *Fire* coming down from *Heaven* in an extraordinary manner and *consumed* them, and yet *Aaron* held his *Peace*. *Job* lost all his *Children* suddenly in *one day*, in an unusual manner, and yet *Job* doth not *murmur*, but *blesse*s *God*, the *Lord* hath *given*, and the *Lord* hath *taken away*, *blessed be the Name of the Lord*. The Great *God* might have taken away all thy *Children*, all thy *Relations* and *Friends*. *Estate*, *Health*; yea, thy *Life* also. Whatever thou enjoyest it is above thy *desert*, how mean and poor soever it be. Know, O *Christian*, *God* exacteth of thee far less than what thine *Iniquities* do deserve. Nothing but *Hell* and *Damnation* answers to the *merit* of *sin*. Wherefore then
Should

Should a living man complain? Shall he murmur and repine because he lies under some Temporal Affliction, who might justly be sent unto Eternal Torments, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched? Oh instead of Complaining it is so bad with you, be thankful it is no worse: Let your loss in your Friends and Relations be what it will, let your Condition be as bad as it can be, yet is it better with you than it would be in Hell, whither your sins deserve God should have sent you, who hath only laid this gentle Affliction upon you, under which you now groan.

Thirdly, Consider your Friends and Relations, that you grieve and mourn so for, if they were good, they are not lost; they are but gone before, taken from the evil to come. Thy Friend or Relation whose loss thou bewailest, was either God's Friend or not, if he was God's Friend as well as thine, why should not God have his Company rather than you? and if God hath him, thou canst not say he is lost; no he is safe, only he hath got the start of thee, being got to Heaven before thee; and surely, if thou lovedst him, as by thy mourning thou pretendest to do, thou canst not grieve because he is Happy. The World is not so pleasant a place, neither have the Godly in any Age found it so; that any of us should so eagerly desire it, either for our selves or our Friends. Happy are they that are got safe out of it into Glory. If thy Friend for whom thou now grievest was bad, thou shouldst have mourned for him whilst he was here on Earth, when by thy mourning thou mightst have made him better; then was the proper, yea the only time for thy Prayers and Tears to have done him any good; but now that he is gone, though thou shouldst weep and mourn never so much, it is altogether

gether in *vain* and *unprofitable*. But if thy *Friend* were a *good Man*, to *grieve* for his departure, seems to *argue* that we have but *hard*, or *doubtful* and *misgiving thoughts* concerning him; for how can we *mourn* for one that is *Happy*? besides thy *Friend* is but taken from the *Evil* to *come*. The *Grave* becomes a *hiding-place* for some, and God sees it *better* for them that they should be *under ground* than *above ground* in such *evil days*; that they may not behold the *Evil* that is like to come upon others, so says the Prophet, *The Righteous are taken away from the evil to come*, and certainly it is *far better* for us to *desire* to go to them, that we may *partake* of their *Happiness*, than to *wish* that they should come to us to partake of our *Miseries*.

Fourthly, *Grieve not immoderately for thy dead Friends and Relations*, for there is hope of their *Resurrection*, and *Eternal Happiness*. It is for them to *mourn* without *measure*, who *mourn* without *hope*, which no *Christian* should do. We are not to look upon the *dead*, because at present they are turned to *Corruption* and *Rottenness*, as a *lost Generation of Men*; for *Death* hath not, nor cannot *Annihilate* and *destroy* them. A *Believer* may say of his *dead Friends and Relations*, what the *Disciples* said unto *Christ* when he told them, *Our Friend Lazarus sleepeth*. Lord say they, *if he sleep he shall do well*, John 11. 12. the same may *Believers* say of their *Friends and Relations* that are *asleep* in their *Graves*, they shall *do well*, for they shall *awake* again: so says the *Church*, *Isaiah 26. 19. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of Herbs, and the Earth shall cast out the dead*. Now we do not use to *weep* and *mourn* for our *Friends and Relations* when they

lie

lie down at night to take a *short sleep* in their *Beds*, because we know they use to *awake* and *arise* again in the *morning*: And why then should we be *grieved* and *troubled*, when they come to *lie down* in the *dust*; and make their *Beds* for a while in the *Grave*, sleeping away time by *Death* until the *morning* of the *Resurrection*; when they shall as *surely*, nay more *surely awake* and *arise* out of their *Graves* than they were certain in the *morning* of any day to *awake* and *arise* out of their *Beds*? And therefore the *Apostle* brings it in as a *Cordial*, for the support of *Believers* under the *loss* of their *Friends* and *Relations* by *Death*, 1 *Thessal.* 4. 13, 14. *I would not have you to be ignorant Brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as those that have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. And so he goes on proving the Doctrine of the Resurrection, and concludes with this, so shall we be ever with the Lord; wherefore, says he, Comfort one another with these words. When Believers die, tho' their Bodies seem to perish in the Earth, yet even then, is their very dust precious in his sight, for he takes care of it and preserves it in the Grave; and he will certainly raise it again at the last day unto a most Glorious State of Happiness; and even then at that instant, when their Souls leave their Bodies, they ascend up into Heaven into the Presence and Enjoyment of God in Glory. As our Saviour therefore said unto his Disciples when he was going away from them into Heaven, in John 14. 28. If ye loved me, ye would rejoyce, because I go unto my Father. The same may dying Believers say unto their Friends and Relations that they leave behind them, if ye loved us, ye would rejoyce, because we are going unto our God and Father; weep not therefore*

therefore for *us*, but weep for *your selves*, who are forbidden for a while to *follow* us unto that *State of Blessedness*, which we are now a going to take Possession of for ever.

Now for a *Conclusion* of this *Subject*, I have but one thing more to add, which may be an *Argument* of great force and strength to prevail upon the *Spirits* of *Christians*, not only to make them *willing* and *contented* to *die*, but to *stir* up in them a *Holy longing* of *Soul* after *Death*; and that is to consider the *Saints* great *gain* and *advantage* by *dying*. Now here I shall not branch out this *Head* into several particulars relating to the *Happiness* of *Believers* in *Heaven* because I intend a particular *Discourse* of the *Happiness* thereof by it self; all that I shall say now concerning the *gain* of *Believers* by *Death*, shall be only in *General*. And so let all such know, that when they *die*, they shall be *perfectly freed* from whatsoever is *Evil* and *Afflictive*; and shall have a *perfect Enjoyment* of whatever is *beneficial* and *good*, they shall be *perfectly freed* from whatsoever is *Evil* and *Afflictive*; there shall then be no more *sorrowing*, or *weeping*, for *Heaven*, whither *Death* brings all *Believers*, is the *place* of the *Joy* of their *Lord*, where *Tears* are *wip'd* away from all *Eyes*, and *Sorrow* from all *Hearts*; for *thither* the *Ransom'd* of the *Lord* are come with *Songs* upon their heads, and obtain *Joy* and *Gladness*, and *sorrow* and *sighing* shall *flee* away, *Isaiah* 35, and the *last*. Where they *live* without *fear*, which here makes the lives of many *burthensome* unto them; for all cause of *fears* are there for ever *abolished* and taken away. There are no *Deformities* upon the *Body* to render it *Contemptible*, nor no *Reproaches* upon the *Name* to make it *Scandalous*; there is no *Sickness* or *Distempers* upon the out-ward

ward Man, nor no *Desertions* or *Darkness* upon the inward Man; there are no *Temptations* from *Satan* to vex the Soul, nor no *Weaknesses* and *Infirmities* to annoy the *Body*; there's no more *Death* or *Dying*, but *Life* for evermore; *Mortality* is now swallowed up of *Life*, *Corruption* hath put on *Incorruption*, and *Mortality* hath put on *Immortality*, and *Death* and *Hell* are cast into the *Lake of Fire*, and which is more than all this, there, that is in *Heaven*, we shall no more sin nor offend *God* to all *Eternity*, *Earth* and *Hell* are the places both of sin and *Suffering*, but *Heaven* is a place of perfect *Joy* and perfect *Holiness*; nothing enters in there that is either *Afflictive*, *Polluted*, or *Defiled*. When *Death* parts Soul and *Body* for a time, then *Sin* and the Soul part for ever. Here we are continually sinning and offending of *God*, and it is the constant grief of a Godly Man that he doth so; here our *Righteousnesses* are no better than filthy rags, and *Grace* it self hath its defects; when we believe most strongly, we must cry out, *Lord*, help our unbelief: but now in *Heaven* there are none, but the *Spirits* of *Just Men* made perfect. In a word, there is nothing there, that may in the least be an *Allay* or *Diminution* unto the *Happiness* of that blessed *State*, that is there enjoyed to *Eternity*.

But this is not all, *Death* doth not only free *Believers* from all that is *Evil* and *Afflictive*, but it brings them to the perfect *Enjoyment* of whatever is *beneficial* and *good*; *Death* being the means and way by which they enter into *Heaven*, where *Blessedness* and *Happiness* is to be enjoyed in such fulness of perfection, as exceeds not only our *Apprehensions*, but our *Imaginations*. For there it is that the infinitely great and blessed *God* discovers himself in all his *Glory*, to be enjoyed by the *Saints* as
their

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their Portion to *Eternity*. There it is that they shall behold their once *bleeding* and *dying*, but now *Glorified Redeemer*, Cloathed in their *own Nature*; who loved them and washed them from their sins in his *own blood*, who was *dead* but is *alive*, and now *lives for ever more*, and because he *lives*, they shall *live* also. There they shall *Enjoy* that which was the great *desire* of the *Apostle*, and theirs also to be with *Christ*, which is *best* of all, and how much *blessedness* is included in those *few words*, to be with *Christ*, the enjoyment of *Heaven* only where *Christ* is, can make known to us. There it is that *Believers* fully understand the meaning of that *Article* of our *Christian Faith*, even the *Communion of Saints*; here it was that they placed their *Delight* in the *Saints* the *Excellent* ones of the *Earth*, and there their *Delight* shall be in great *measure* in the *Saints*, some of the *Excellent* ones of *Heaven*. There shall then be no *mixture* of *sin* and *Corruption* with our *Graces*, which here is an *Allay* to the *Lustre* and *Brightness* of them, but they shall *Shine* forth in their full *Glory* and *Beauty*. *Grace* there shall be in its full *Perfection*; nothing shall then be *wanting* in our *Knowledge*, nor any thing *imperfect* in our *Love*, our *Obedience* shall then *flow* from us with all *readiness* and *cheerfulness* of *Soul*, and our *Joy* and *Delight* in *God* shall not admit of the least *Diminution* or *Disturbance* to *Eternity*. This, O *Soul*, is that in general which the *Happiness* of *Heaven* is made up of, and to the *Enjoyment* of this *Happiness* without *Interruption* or *Cessation* for ever, is that to which *Death* brings all *Believers*. And surely if ever those words have any *Truth* in them, they are here verified, so that a *Saint* may truly say, *The lines are now fallen to me in a pleasant place, I have a goodly Heritage.* O *Blessed* and *Glorious*

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Glorious State indeed! who is there that *knows* and *believes* this infinite unconceivable *Happiness*, that would not *willingly die* to enjoy it? Unto which *State of Blessedness*, God of his *infinite Mercy* bring us all to the *Enjoyment* of, for the alone sake of *Jesus Christ* our only *Saviour* and *Redeemer*. Amen.

F I N I S.



